A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION AND EVALUATION OF ACCESS, THE EXPERIENCES AND SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The thesis has aimed to evaluate the effect of access policies on recruitment and experience of black students in higher education. As part of a broadening and reconceptualisation of institutional access programmes and of black students responses to them, I have examined black student admission and progression with a specific focus on student experience of particular course provision.

The thesis has identified the existence of three models of access: the market oriented access model; the social justice access model; and the social engineering access model. Such models are not mutually exclusive, but overlap at given points. Furthermore, my research has demonstrated that dominant aspects of each model can be found in the structure of particular courses, i.e. HNC into construction, the Dip HE and BEd. These courses have in particular ways tried to promote wider black participation, and it is for this reason why they have been the object of investigation primarily through qualitative and ethnographic methods, exercised through individual interviews and group discussions with black students.

The thesis has made a contribution to knowledge by attempting to show the correlation between specific course philosophy and forms of student response, including 'Black Scepticality' which appears in black student culture. It appears that certain kinds of courses help create the conditions for 'Black Scepticality' to thrive. Furthermore my research suggests that the internal

contradictions and tensions of the courses produce specific effects in student consciousness and culture. Black students 'live' and to some degree 'unmask' these tensions as personal dilemmas, ambiguities and uncertainties.

The thesis is an attempt to locate and reconceptualise institutional access programmes as experienced by black students, within a larger framework of state intervention into the social management of 'race' tensions. From these bases I hope to contribute to a more adequate sociology of black experience in state apparatuses.

CONTENTS

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Conventions and Abbreviations

In the absence of an agreed definition concerning the term 'access', I will use the following definition within the context of the thesis. The term 'access' with a small 'a' within much educational literature is primarily concerned with maximising the numbers of students taking up education, although achievement and progression will also be a consideration. However, in terms of black access, I feel that issues around achievement, institutional ethos, progression and destination are of central importance due to factors such as racism and racial discrimination. Thus when I use the term in the text I refer not just to increasing the number of students but also to the quality of experience that black students can expect from such institutions in terms of support, empathy, career choice and occupational destination.

The term 'Access' with a big 'A' will only be used for appropriate headings in the thesis or when referring to specific Access programmes, like Access to Higher Education Courses.

The term 'Black' as used in thesis refers to people of African-Caribbean and Asian origin.

I have followed the recent convention of putting 'race' in quotation marks to distinguish it from any biological connotation the word otherwise has.

The research for this thesis was carried out whilst the institution was still a Polytechnic. It has since become a University. However, throughout the thesis the term Polytechnic will be used for consistency.

ACRG	Access Recognition Group
AVAs	Authorised Validation Agencies
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CVCP	Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
DES	Department of Education and Science: Now called DFE: Department for Education
ET	Employment Training
FE	Further Education
FEU	Further Education Unit
HE	Higher Education
PCAS	Polytechnics Central Admission System
TA	Training Agency: now called TEED: Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate
UCCA	Universities Central Council on Admissions

INTRODUCTION.

> **I have reservations about the term 'access'. It implies that someone is let in to participate and then the onus is on them to adapt; to learn the language of academic discourse, to adopt the culture of the institution, to accept its power structures, to change timetables, and lifestyles to fit in, and to be assessed by its own undisclosed and unchallengeable criteria (Ian Mcnay, 1990: 127).**

It can be argued that traditionally higher education has served an elite group of white middle class academically qualified men. Research carried out over the last fifteen years has continued to highlight the underrepresentation of working class people, black people and women in higher education (Heath and Ridge, 1980: Metcalf, 1993; Thomas, 1990). Although women have increased their percentage share of full-time places during the 1980s, at present reaching nearly 50% of full-time entrants (DFE, 1992), there is little evidence that black or working class people have done likewise.

In particular, the racial discrimination suffered by many black people has created additional barriers that block their access to predominantly white social and economic institutions. Evidence from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has shown that as national unemployment rises, black unemployment rises faster (Daniel, 1968; Smith, 1977; Ohri and Faruqi, 1988; Employment Gazette, 1993). In terms of education, there exists overwhelming evidence showing the extent of individual and institutional racism

experienced by black pupils in British Schools (Tomlinson, 1981; Wright, 1987; Mac An Ghaill, 1988).

Research carried out by Ballard and Holden (1975) pointed to the extent of underrepresentation and racial discrimination faced by black students in higher education. Brennan and McGeevor (1990) concluded that black graduates experienced more difficulty than white graduates in obtaining suitable employment. In commenting on the findings of such research, Singh (1990) makes the crucial point that:

> **All ethnic minority graduates perceive ethnicity and racial discrimination as the crucial factors affecting their chances in the labour -market despite their possession of graduate qualifications. These experiences and perceptions must influence their view of the value of higher education as well as their motivation and career aspirations. (Singh, 1990: 342).**

The existence of such fundamental inequalities has been partially acknowledged by the government but they have not created a political climate which has been conducive to promoting radical policies on eliminating racial discrimination. On the contrary, the Conservative government and particularly those on the right wing of the party have chosen to emphasise the perceived dangers posed by black communities to the social and cultural fabric of British society (Barker, 1981). The persistent characterisation of black communities being to blame for their deprivation due to their 'strange way of life' has long been a theme that has run through government thinking on race and has been evident in moral panics about immigration, law and order, black

unemployment and the need for political stability (Hall, 1978; Gilroy, 1982; Solomos, 1985).

The changing structure of higher education, currently being influenced by the present government speaks a language that professes 'wider educational access' and greater 'equal opportunities'. The central questions that need to be asked are: Where do black people fit into these new arrangements? if at all? What does access actually mean for black black people? Can wider access compensate for the structural racial discrimination evident in many schools? What is the connection between wider access and black student occupational destination? What is the culture of higher education ? How do black students perceive it? To what extent do 'wider access initiatives represent the janus faces of state interventions ? and to what extent are such interventions ideologically based?. It is the intended aim of this thesis to shed more light on these central issues, and to suggest ways in which the black experience can be incorporated more fully into the belly of higher education.

Chapter one of the thesis traces the development of both national and local discourses of access prevalent in a variety of research reports and examines their content to find out how they conceptualise black student access issues. Chapter one then extrapolates the ideological element in access discourses by comparing and contrasting different definitions of access. Finally, Chapter one tries to construct three ideal type models of access which share some affinity with existing course philosophy and provision. Chapter two outlines the author's theoretical position

and outlines methodological problems of engaging in such research, and seeks to justify the usage of appropriate sociological methods of inquiry. Chapters three, four and five present the lived experiences of black students studying on three higher educational courses. Within these chapters black students speak candidly about their perceptions and experiences on such courses. These three chapters represent the qualitative centre-piece of the study. Chapter six tries to provide an explanatory paradigm which accounts for black student interaction on the three courses. Within this chapter it is argued that a reconceptualisation of black student cultures is required to understand the complex interface of black students in white higher educational structures. Chapter seven attempts to build on black student experience by outlining possible *institutional initiatives that can be adopted to support* black students in higher education. This also includes the development of a black construct of educational access. The final chapter attempts to locate the complex interrelationships that exist between black students cultures, institutional philosophies, boundary maintenance and wider governmental interventions, which are at times symbolic, but have far reaching repercussions. It is in this sense that black student experience sits at the centre of these concentric rings of influence and is both affected and reflected dialectically.

PART ONE ANALYSING ACCESS

CHAPTER 1. The Odyssey Behind the Case: Exploring Educational Discourses of Access

> **The last decade has seen a great deal of research and a number of committees of enquiry into the education of black minority group pupils in Britain. Much research has gone into trying to establish the relative weight of various factors contributing to minority group disadvantage in schools. There is a growing consensus that policy initiatives must be sought in schools to help reduce persistent divisions and inequalities between sections of the British community. Little is known about the position and background of minorities in Higher Education, where the underrepresentation is easier to observe than prove (Little and Robbins, 1981: 124).**

The aim of this chapter is to locate the different discourses that have framed black students within educational structures. Firstly I will briefly discuss the official policy responses to black students in schools and argue that aspects of this response are identifiable in more recent debates about widening access to higher education for 'underrepresented groups' such as black people. Through critically reviewing the access literature in terms of assumptions, policy implications and contradictions, I will construct a framework that seeks to unmask the rhetoric within access discourses, and the way these relate to black student access. In the final section of this chapter I will explore the problematic nature of the ideology of access.

To understand the present debates about access to higher education for black students one must understand past educational discourses particularly concerning school education which have constructed black students as educational 'problems' (John, 1981; Carby, 1982; Solomos, 1985). It is the case that British educational policy has had a poor record in response to the presence of black students in educational structures. Key 'radical' educationalists followed different policies at different times with a rough shift in stance from the colour blind approach of the 1960s, through to the multicultural approach of the 1970s and finally to the anti-racist approach of the 1980s.

Assimilation and multicultural perspectives tend to reinforce cultural deprivation theories which blame black cultures, for their perceived abnormality and underachievement. The classic educational policy that enshrined this compensatory-deficit approach to black children was Section 11. Section 11 entitled local authorities with significant 'New Commonwealth Immigrants' to apply to the government for special grants for the employment of staff in areas where there were substantial numbers of black people. Such 'special ' grants did not really identify racism as the central cause of racial disadvantage, rather Section 11 was based on the philosophy of integration which laid the 'problem' of disadvantage primarily within the cultures of black people themselves. In short, Section 11 was preoccupied with assimilation rather than racial discrimination. Dorn and Hibbert (1987) argue that:

> **Section 11 is very much a child of the 1960s and its current problems and persistent**

> **contradictions must be seen as emanating from the race relations policy ideologies that prevailed at the time...Section 11 itself has remained relatively static in its conception and application (Dorn and Hibbert, 1987: 60).**

The important point is that the central negative assumptions inherent in much of the government thinking on 'race' have systematically been reproduced through both mainstream and marginal educational policies. Section 11 represented just one strand of the compensatory ideology. Government funded research carried out in the 1960s and 70s appeared to be highlighting a 'problem' of black underachievement (DES, 1967; SCRRI, 1969; Little, 1975).

The central themes that flowed through such reports, as identified above, suggested that black children suffered from a range of complex disabilities such as 'unrealistic aspirations', 'psychological maladjustments', 'cultural conflict', language deficits', 'weak family units', and 'educational underachievement'. These assumptions and stereotypes were particularly endemic in later educational research such as that produced by Rampton (1981) and Swann (1985).[1] Such

1. The Rampton Report (1981) using evidence from public examinations in 1978-79, showed that only 3% of African Caribbean school leavers obtained 5 or more higher grades at CSE and 'O' level examinations, in comparison with Asian and other school leavers who achieved 18% and 16% respectively. At 'A' level, only 2% of African-Caribbean pupils gained 1 or more 'A' levels in comparison to 13% for Asians and 12% for others. Rampton cited both 'intentional and unintentional racism as a primary factor in the underachievement of African-Caribbean pupils and its main recommendation was to extend multicultural education to all schools. There was no real questioning of whether multicultural education was an appropriate vehicle to tackle both individual and structural forms of racism. The key assumption located the root of the problem in the childs culture. Swann (1985) drew on the commonsense cultural deficit model to explain apparent differential attainment levels between African-Caribbean and Asian pupils. Swann used popular racist perceptions of 'the

educational literature helped to sustain the view that the black child was inherently pathological, and that such 'pathology' led inevitably to underachievement, which could only be remedied through 'special state interventions', that were often compensatory, remedial and coercive (Carby, 1982, Solomos, 1987). Thus discourses constructed around black students in the past have been located within the 'problem' of 'underachievement' and the problem of 'black abnormality'. There has been little debate on the problems caused by a racist and eurocentric education system and its effect on the black student, as Green (1982) points out:

> **There is a common tendency in much educational writing on race to allow that critical slippage from 'the problems encountered by' to the 'problems of '. Given the way in which the state frames the issues in terms of the 'problem' posed by blacks rather than the problem of racism, it's little wonder that people should read state policies not as remedies for racism but as ways of dealing with blacks (Green, 1982: 23).**

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mild and passive Asian pupil who worked hard', to contrast with the 'disruptive' African-Caribbean pupil, and stated that"..the very different school performances of Asians and West-Indians seems to lie deeply within their respective cultures'. The underachievement discourse has been challenged by Reeves and Chavennes, (1981) who point to the absence of class analysis in Rampton. Also the research of Geoffrey Driver (1980) suggested that African-Caribbean girls in particular were 'overachieving'. There is the problem of categorising such pupils for testing purposes, the term Asian, West-Indian, and White mask the reality of considerable cultural diversity within each group. Tanna, (1990) has raised further methodological problems in terms of biased samples, and argues that:: '..Such statistical information alone makes claims of high achievement levels amongst Asians questionable...What is interesting is that more than 67% of those studies which showed Asians to be underachieving had large samples. Troyna has suggested that empirical evidence for Asian underachievement might be said to have a stronger quantitative base than the evidence for black underachievement' (Tanna, 1990 : 352). What has to be acknowledged is the ideological and political contours of this discourse.

An embryonic shift in educational policy on race was noticeable in the 1978 DES initiative, with its equal opportunities overtone, which attempted to increase the proportion of underrepresented sections of society in higher education and the service professions. The DES encouraged selected LEAS to develop Access Courses aimed at members of the black communities. Since 1978, Access Courses have enjoyed relative success in increasing the recruitment of black students and women into higher education (Millins 1984; Lyon 1988). However, this development has also been viewed as the state's response to the mounting levels of racial tension, due to the discriminatory nature of major institutions (Kearney and Diamond 1990). In view of this, a key issue is the extent to which governmental and institutional commitment to access is based primarily on equal opportunity or a continuation of a compensatory model based on 'special needs'. It has to be acknowledged that there are different versions of 'equal opportunity', ranging from a liberal meritocratic model to a radical outcomes model. These will be fully discussed in later chapters.

In the light of the state's framing of 'black educational problems', how do we make sense of current state interventions in the area of access to higher education?. A series of major national and local reports have raised the issue of creating wider educational access for specific groups who are underrepresented in further and higher education, such as black people, women, people with disabilities and the unemployed. Does this apparent shift in emphasis from, 'underachievement' to 'underrepresentation' herald a paradigmatic movement away from the 'problem'

centred discourses of the past? By examining a selection of key literature I will try to answer these important questions.

Such a review of the literature on access enables us to locate the position of black students in such discourses, so an assessment can be made regarding the commitment to racial equality and equal access in further and higher educational structures. The Government Papers and high profile reports originating from a variety of funding sources ranging from the Training Agency to the Open University, provide an 'official' language and frame of reference within which policy developments can be set. I have given each cluster of reports a broad heading indicating key themes and focus; they are demography and access, vocational access and the labour market, admissions and access, equal opportunities and access, access and anti-discriminatory practice and the black experience.

1.1 Demography and Access

In the mid-1980s, the DES projected a decline of conventional applicants to higher education, particularly between 1990 and 1995, which would necessitate a policy of recruitment from outside the conventional mainstream (DES 1985a). However, this long-term concern has proved unfounded, as applications to polytechnics and universities have increased in 1991 by 11% and 7% respectively. Although there has been a decline in the teenage population it has been more acute in social classes four and five, which provide only a minority of higher education students (Connolly, 1991). Given these demographic forecasts,

one consequence has been a concern with the shortage of skilled entrants to the labour market.

The government's white paper entitled 'Higher Education: Meeting The Challenge' (1987) highlighted this concern for demographic down turn and skill shortages, by stating:

> **There is a crucial need to improve standards in our schools if we are to maintain the quality of our higher education by enabling it to draw more deeply on the talents of all children, irrespective of their social or economic background (DES, 1987: 1).**

The white paper went on to argue that higher education places should be awarded to:

> **...all those who have the necessary intellectual competence, motivation and maturity to benefit from higher education and who wish to do (DES, 1987: 7).**

The problem is that "intellectual competence" has all too often been used as a proxy for "good A levels" or a specific vocational qualifications, which has always disadvantaged those who left school without them. The government's concept of "ability to benefit" is also problematic, for it essentially relies on subjective definitions of a person's ability and worth. This can of course be used positively, but it can also be used negatively too.

It is also clear from the white paper that A cess Courses are seen by the government as:

> **The third recognised route into higher education- for those, mainly mature entrants who hold neither traditional sixth-form, nor vocational qualifications (DES, 1987: 10).**

While I believe that the government's recognition of Access Courses was a positive step, the designation of it as the "third" route carries with it hierarchical connotations of such courses being third rate, which may further stigmatise those individuals on such courses. Research by Caine (1990) has supported the view that Access Courses are seen by certain institutions as 'second rate' or as a 'back way in'. There is no reason why such courses should not have been given equal status with sixth-form qualifications or vocational ones.

Throughout the white paper there was a commitment to increase participation rates among "young people", "women", and "mature entrants". However, no overt references were made to the educational needs of black people. It seems to be assumed by the government that wider access for the afore mentioned groups will automatically create access for black people. The government's apparent racial blindness approach to black access issues fails to take account of the structural and attitudinal barriers that exist in the real world for black people. The white paper is also littered with references to the "disadvantaged", but there is no acknowledgement of the structural factors that place individuals into such a category in the first place.

1.2 Vocational Access and the Labour Market

As well as having a concern about demography, the white paper was keen to see more emphasis placed on access to vocational courses. The strong suspicion must be that the government's white paper, overall, is not about tackling educational inequality, but is concerned primarily in meeting the needs of industry, by pump priming higher education *into producing more Engineers*, Scientists, Technicians and Managers for the predicted labour market demands. In this context terms such as "efficiency" and "quality" become ideological 'neswspeak' for processing larger numbers of students, even if it is larger numbers of the same kinds of students, as the report spoke of:

> **..Government's and industry's concern about the need to increase the output of graduate scientists and engineers...Taken together, the work of the planning and funding bodies to change the subject balance within higher education should lead by 1990 to increases of 35% and 25% in numbers of graduates in science and engineering respectively..The current shortages of highly qualified scientists and engineers, particularly in fields related to information technology, are well documented (DES, 1987: 7).**

In 1989 the Department of Education and Science(DES) produced 'The Widening of Access to Higher Education'. This report was prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors after visits were carried out in 39 PCFC institutions. The focal point of the report was to see how higher educational institutions had responded to directives laid down by the white paper in 1987. The report highlighted the uneven developments in access provision uncovered by the study. The report stated that:

> **In the institutions inspected several initiatives to widen access are currently under way but they tend to be ad hoc, disparate and un-coordinated and are often inadequately underpined by wider institutional policy (DES, 1989: 2).**

On the very important issue of racial equality and access, the report had a solitary paragraph stating that:

> **Special Access Courses had proliferated to about 400, offering multi-exit points for career development...several of these courses had been aimed at specific groups-women, the unemployed,ethnic minorities, and have been planned to take account of family commitments and financial constraints of mature students (DES, 1989: 3).**

What was interesting was that black people,women, and the unemployed only really gained recognition in the report under the auspices of access courses. There was no real discussion or argument for making "traditional qualifications" more flexible and appealing to the afore mentioned groups.

The economic theme that was so prevalent in the white paper, was noticeably still present in this report. The report almost exclusively focused on those higher education institutions that had developed partnerships with local or national companies in providing courses. It was also noticeable how the appropriateness of the higher educational curriculum was only discussed in terms of technical innovations, rather than a discussion of the need for cultural representation in the higher educational curriculum. The report looked at Associate Student Programmes, Franchising, Open College Federations, and Access Courses, but no consideration was given to the value of outreach

initiatives in the local communities, as a means of creating wider access.

The report went on to highlight the fact that there was little evidence of staff development initiatives related to widening access, and was also very critical of the way in which institutions collected data about age, gender, racial origin. It also criticised the failure of institutions to utilise what data they possessed, effectively in the areas of teaching methods and modes of assessment. It was interesting that when citing barriers to access, the report's narrow conception revolved around the level of specialist knowledge required at entry, different levels of staff commitment, and the demands of employers and professional bodies. While these are important issues, there was no real consideration of the way that the prejudices associated with race, class and gender combine to create substantial barriers to access for black people, working class people and women.

The report spoke of evidence that showed that more students with a range of backgrounds were entering and staying in further and higher education on diplomas and first degrees. However, research carried out by Brennan and Mcgeevor (1987) on the distribution and employment patterns of black graduates has indicated that across certain courses, black occupancy rates varied from 0% to 28%. This research was ignored.

1.3 Admissions and Access

A Training Agency funded project entitled 'Admissions to Higher Education' carried out by Fulton and Ellwood, (1989) attempted to map the present pattern of admissions policies and practices to examine the constraints and incentives that were affecting the potential increase in the participation rate.

The report suggested wide ranging recommendations to government, funding agencies, higher educational institutions and departments. The substance of the report reinforced the view of uneven institutional development in widening access. It pointed to a belief in some institutions that there was a bottomless pool of 'good A level entrants'. The report was revealing, but pessimistic about the commitment of admissions officers to alter their perceptions of particular groups of students, as this example illustrates:

> **Admissions Officers and Admissions Tutors also wished to make space for non-traditional or more disadvantaged applicants, but often without very active efforts to recruit them.. significantly only a few institutions used outreach activities targeted at specific groups (Fulton and Ellwood, 1989: 6).**

It was clear from the report that fragmented and often contradictory admissions policies were the norm. Some institutions did show a willingness to try such things as Credit Accumulation Transfer (CATS), Accredited Prior Learning (APL). Associate Programmes, Direct Entry and Access Courses. The problem was that such innovation tended to be found in those institutions or departments which had traditionally encouraged adult learners, or those institutions who were facing a serious

decline in specific subject areas like science and engineering. The irony was that other institutions facing decline in the afore mentioned areas were still insisting on only taking 'good A level entrants', because in their eyes A levels meant standards. This particular stance was evident in the university sector. The report graphically illustrated the complacency and inertia of many higher educational institutions to open up their structures to different kinds of students. As the the authors stated:

> **The optimism, or inertia, which we found , may be the result of ignorance about the full implications of demographic decline (Fulton and Ellwood, 1989: 11).**

Although the report was critical of many admissions policies, it did not specifically deal with how such policies actually affect particular groups, like black students, women, and the unemployed. It is clear that such policies have the effect of sustaining a covert operation of gatekeeping.

Fulton and Ellwood's report was also concerned with demographic issues, and a consistent theme was the need to promote more efficiency and quality in higher education. The report argued that ad hoc admissions polices was a barrier to increasing student numbers. This theme echoed the concern of the Government's white paper (1987) and the DES's two (1989) reports.

An interesting comparison can be made here with the U.S.A. The report entitled 'Aspects of Higher Education in the United States' (DES,1989) highlighted the contradiction in government thinking

on widening access. It also has particular ramifications for black student access to higher education. The report investigated seven American universities and two community colleges. In one part of the report they spoke of the need to increase wider access for 'disadvantaged groups' and in another they spoke of the 'problem of student wastage' and the fear of 'lowering standards':

> **If higher education institutions in England are to achieve the participation levels set by the government they will need to reorient themselves in new ways to recruit not only more of the 18 year-old cohort but also groups currently underrepresented such as women and mature entrants. They will also need to explore more fully the relationship between wastage and access. It is probably axiomatic that much more open access, with the emphasis on attracting difficult groups or groups for whom the commitment of time and energy is difficult, will lead to higher wastage rates (DES, 1989: 29).**

It is noticeable from this report, that little or no reference was made to the need for student support facilities. It was taken for granted that those 'difficult groups' would inevitably lower academic standards and increase rates of student attrition. Implicitly such groups as black people, women and the unemployed are ether ignored or constructed as a 'problem' for the system. The elitist and contradictory assumptions that underpin this report in particular, and government discourse in general, are challenged by research carried out by Millins (1979) Bourner and Hamed (1987) which show the high levels of achievement in terms of diplomas and degrees of 'non-traditional students'. The two Government White Papers and the report published by the DES are important because their

definition of access is rooted firmly in the market, i.e. all underrepresented groups should be given the chance to compete for rationed places in higher education. This position does not deal with institutional racism and how it creates barriers for black people trying to enter such institutions.[2] The DES publication shows the contradictory aspects of government directives, on the one hand there is call for wider access but on the other there is a fear that such accessibility will inevitably lead to falling standards of graduates. From this perspective, policy change lies in creating a more vocational climate within higher education.

There have been a number of other key national reports dealing with Access issues. The Accessibility of Higher Education (1990) report was produced by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). It was concerned with selection and admissions policies and how they related to Access Courses. One of the key findings of the report was that:

> **There is no recognition that recruitment policies need to be reviewed: where there is no knowledge of alternative systems of accreditation and no acceptance that the likely demographic down-turn in the 1990s will require alternative sources**

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2. Institutional racism can be defined as those established laws, rules, customs and practices which systematically reflect and reproduce racial inequalities in a given society. In the context of this study, I draw upon a further elaboration of this concept provided by Benokraits and Feagin (1974) who argue that "institutional racism refers to the structure of inequality reflected in the racially based differential allocation of status, privileges and material rewards in numerous institutional sectors and shaped by the historically precipitated and currently persisting processes of subodination whose mechanism primarily involve the imposition of conventional norms by often unprejudical role players in the various institutional sectors, in a way which, though covert and usually unintentional produces racially relevant consequences". (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1974: 23-24).

> **of recruitment, with consequential organisational changes (CNAA, 1990: 4).**

The report went on to criticise the ad hoc admissions procedures of the public sector, and highlighted the inconsistency in student support for Access students.

The qualitative side of the report indicated that the perceptions of courses by 'mature students' differed widely from the view of tutors, where such students saw courses as narrower than they had anticipated. In recognition of this the report advocated the need for a more student centred approach. The report did not consider how such admissions policies could discriminate against black people specifically. The report appeared to suggest that more coordination of access networks, staff development, student support and teaching strategies would be enough to ensure the smooth passage of Access students from further to higher education.

The Open University published the Udace Report in 1989, compiled by Bob West. The report highlighted the fact that although the open university had over the last 20 years been offering 'open access', it had been failing to widen access to black students, women and working class students. The report was very critical of the 'first come first served' admission policy. The findings from the report suggested that in the West-Midlands region, the university only attracted (2.4%) of African-Caribbean and (2.5%) of Asian Students. This was in comparison to an intake of (95%) of white students. It was also found that African-Caribbean students were found to be concentrated in the Social

Sciences (39.3%) with Asian students concentrated on Science Foundation courses (16.1%).

The report spoke of the need to improve the black student profile across all courses and faculties to encourage participation and avoid what it called "learning ghettoes". The report suggested that the liberal access model needed to be replaced with a radical access model. It was stressed that the liberal model had not dealt adequately with issues of marketing, outreach, financial and support for those groups who had previously been denied access. It was argued that the ethos of the open university was still 'white and middle class'. On the specific issues of the universities curriculum the report stated that:

> **The Open University curriculum does not offer courses attractive to all groups, and the absence of ethnic minorities and the skewed patterns of student participation by ethnic origin, and sex, are reflections of courses which exclude broad participation (West, 1989: 87).**

While it was encouraging to see the Open University acknowledging that it had failed to take on black access issues in the past, it was evident from the report, that this new enthusiasm stemmed from a need to increase student numbers in the West-Midland region, rather than a belief in the necessity for equal opportunities and multi-racial representativeness. The three reports taken together are important, as they locate policy change in the area of student admissions.

1.4 Access and Equal Opportunity Policy and Practice

In 1988 the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education(NAB), produced a report called Action for Access. This report spoke of widening opportunities in higher education. The report itself was aimed at a wide spectrum of institutions and bodies, which ranged from polytechnics, universities and colleges, to the department of social security, employers and trade unions. NAB saw its role was to:

> **review the existing participation in public sector higher education of women, black people and members of other ethnic minorities, of people with disabilities, and other groups presently underrepresented in higher education (NAB, 1988: 85).**

The report advised all institutions who had not yet done so, to develop equal opportunity policies which should be integrated into the corporate plan, which should include sex, 'race', disability and socio-economic background. The report with its 47 recommendations was wide ranging in its call for reform, covering such areas as marketing, outreach, interviewing, financial support, curriculum development, staff and student recruitment and staff development. It was suggested that institutions should set targets for underrepresented groups and such targets should be solidified in a contractual agreement.

The report went on to advise employers to increase their attractiveness by offering positive training and career prospects to women, black people and people with disabilities. The report

touched on some very important issues, like the fact that many potential students spoke about the problems they had in getting information about courses and that students saw such institutions as being inflexible and not accessible to them, as the report stated:

> **it is evident that many sections of the population feel that higher education is not for them, it is the institution's responsibility to seek mechanisms to help overcome such attitudes (NAB, 1988: 42).**

From the report it was clear that one of the most important barriers to student participation was finance. This situation was particularly acute for access students who had to negotiate the 21 hour rule, of being able to study and receive benefits. However, in practice such students have to face barrage of 'Restart Interviews' where they must prove that they are 'actively seeking work'. Such students may also have heavy family commitments, which discretionary grants may not help alleviate.

The NAB report also touched on the issue of student finance and recommended that both PCFC, LEA's, Training Commission, and the Department of Social Security should:

> **Collaborate to develop a coherent system of student support at an adequate level, including the provision of mandatory grants for those on full-time access courses(such an award should not be taken into consideration against subsequent awards for degrees or diploma courses (NAB, 1988: 38).**

The report although positive about the development of access courses, warned of access being used as the only route to process

those traditionally underrepresented in higher education, regardless of whether they needed it or not. Regarding institutional policy, NAB found that only one third of higher educational institutions had any formal procedures for dealing with cases of alleged racist or sexist behaviour or harassment of students with disabilities. Out of 113 responses only 2 institutions had procedures that acknowledged sexual and racial harassment. This report dealt with crucial access issues that the proceeding government literature left out.

The Access Effect (1989) was also published by the CNAA. It was based on research in one higher educational institution, which wanted to find out if access courses were providing a valuable and successful route for mature students, in comparison with the A level and non-traditional route. The report also contained a qualitative evaluation of black student experience. The report estimated that between 13-14% of the student population within one institution was black. It was found that in terms of the various routes into higher education, there were similarities between asian and white students. African-Caribbean students were found to be significantly underrepresented in higher education. The study found that the African-Caribbean students tended to be older than other groups, and were less likely to have two A levels, and were more likely to be of working class origin. A very interesting finding in this report was that the majority of black students were not entering higher education from access courses. Although it was clear that local access provision was providing a limited increase, it was also found that 40% of the black sample already in higher education had

previously been in further education or on government training schemes.

Within the black sample, African-Caribbean students were more likely to be found in the Social Sciences and Humanities, whereas Asian students were found mainly in the Natural Sciences, and Business Studies. It was also apparent that access courses were not attracting older Asian students. The report showed that black students as whole were more likely to report having bad schooling experiences. It was also pointed out that very few black and white Access students had heard of Direct Entry as a route into higher education. The report considered the role of access courses in acting as a catalyst for institutional change. But more importantly it raised the question about the levels of black participation on such courses. It began tentatively to explore what 'wider access' meant for black as well as white students.

Another report that was concerned with developing access was The Dip HE Experience, (1989) carried out by Bruce et al for the CNAA. The aim of this report was to assess how far Dip HE as a specific route could help to bring about greater flexibility in higher education, and to see how 'non-traditional' students fared on such courses. The Dip HE was envisaged as a course that would allow students to keep their options open somewhat longer. It was seen as a catalyst where innovative teaching methods could be practiced and developed. At the time of the study about 14% of the students on Dip HE were black. In the case of Wolverhampton Polytechnic, the Dip HE had increased its intake of black students from nine in 1984-5 to 24 in 1987. It

was evident from the report that while some institutions had sought to use Dip HE as a facilitator for delayed choice, other institutions had used it as nothing more than a drop-out route for failing students. The report stated that students on the course were 'luke warm' about the overall value of Dip HE as a qualification. There was evidence that the course did not have much marketability in the eyes of many employers. On average between 75-85% of students on such courses achieved a diploma or degree, and their results compared favourably with other courses.

The report stated that Dip HE had brought flexibility to higher education, but that it had failed to get recognition in its own right, and failed to make a lasting impression in the university sector. Even so the report concluded that:

> **Our survey provides strong evidence that widening access to under-qualified and disadvantaged students, introducing interdisciplinary courses and using radical teaching methods do not result in lowering academic standards. Motivation and self confidence are equally important factors in success. (Bruce et al, 1989: 29).**

The three reports discussed above seems to suggest that higher education itself has to change and become more responsive to the needs of black students, women, disabled students and working class students. Two of the reports specifically saw policy and practice changes as occuring through Access courses and the Dip HE.

1.5 Access and Anti-Discriminatory Practice

The literature identified in this section links access issues with the procedures laid down by the 1976 Race Relations Act. The concern for access is rooted within the legal framework of tackling racial discrimination. It thus represents an institutionalised black voice.

The Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) report, Words or Deeds (1989) was a serious attempt to map out the state of equal opportunity and access across the university and polytechnic sectors. The report uncovered an air of 'moral superiority', 'ignorance' and 'complacency' that were inherent in some of the rhetorical pronouncements on 'race', class and religious concerns.

The theme that ran through the report suggested that many institutions had not even begun to think seriously about their stand on issues of equal opportunity, for example over one quarter of university responses were by letter rather than by completed questionnaire. What was interesting was the way some universities used their university charter as an indicator of their commitment to equal opportunity. In many of the polytechnics the local authority equal opportunities policy was used as an example of their commitment, however, a specific institutional policy was often lacking.

This raised the question about the role of equal opportunity policies in the aftermath of the removal of public sector higher education, from local authority control by the 1988 Education

Reform Act. It was also evident from the report that some institutions would use the tactic of playing specific underrepresented groups like; black people, women, the unemployed, and the disabled off against each other. For example disability was mentioned in a third of all university responses and by ten polytechnics, in reference to their equal opportunities policy. Significantly on the issue of 'race' equality, some institutions interpreted this in the light of overseas recruitment of foreign students, and in the provision of special courses for such students. This was a ploy to avoid detailed examination of their policies regarding black people either born or resident in Britain. The report stated that only six polytechnics and two universities showed any evidence of curriculum development in an anti-racist setting. The report argued that:

> **race or colour discrimination was so rarely mentioned, only 6 institutions interpreted equal opportunities as set of policies unequivocally designed to overcome the effects of racism (Williams et al, 1989: 15).**

It was also clear from the report that pressure from LEA's staff and unions were given as reasons for equal opportunity development, rather than pressure from the community, or 'race' relations legislation or other advisory bodies. The universities tended to deal with equal opportunity issues either through special committees or specified individuals. While the polytechnics tended to have either special units, or general committees that dealt with 'race', sex and disability. The 'inertia' and 'ignorance' discovered by Fulton and Ellwood, were very much in evidence in the areas of 'race', sex and disability. In its

summation, the report stated that many universities and polytechnics:

> **had barely begun to think about the issues...such as black student recruitment, discrimination and harassment, staff development, curriculum reviews. The overall institutional ethos and links with community groups were the concern of a very small minority of organisations (Williams et al, 1989: 24).**

The CRE report raised some very important questions that are part and parcel of the evaluation of where black students fit into current debates about widening access. Do institutions provide an environment where black students feel welcome and valued? why has the higher education curriculum been subject to little scrutiny?. Even courses in the Social Sciences that value personal experiences frequently fail to validate the knowledge, culture and experience from the black communities. There are also subjects that have not even questioned their applicability and relevance to a multi-racial society. These points are underlined in further reports which consider the legal implications of discrimination and qualitative experience of being black in white educational structures.

A report by the CRE called 'An Investigation into St George's Hospital Medical School (1988) showed how a a computerised admissions system had been so devised that it gave negative weightings to black people and women, which was in breach of Section 1 (1)a and Section (17)b of the 1976 Race Relations Act. The Admissions programme had been constructed by observations of admissions decisions made over a period of years. Certain factors were assessed by the computer program,

such as the number of 'O' levels, number of grades, subjects, Head Teacher's report, parental occupation, 'race' and gender.

On the actual UCCA form, categories of 'Caucasian' and 'non-Caucasian' were used. The Caucasian females had their personal score multiplied by 1.05, non-Caucasian males had their scores multiplied by 1.33. So a non-Caucasian female would have a weighting of 1.3965. These weightings increased the candidates computer score and so lowered the applicants position in the ranking order, which made it less likely that they would get an interview.

It was estimated that about sixty black applicants a year between 1982-86 were being denied access, despite the possibility that some of them may have got into other medical schools. However, because it was an estimate the real figure could have been allot higher. In view of findings of the report, Michael Day, former Chairman of the CRE stated that:

> **what is disturbing about this case is that discrimination was occuring where one would least expect it, at a medical school with a progressive reputation and a relatively high proportion of ethnic minority students. What is happening elsewhere (CRE, 1988: 1).**

The CRE's recommendations focused on the need for an admissions programmes to be open and controlled by a senior member of staff, and that application forms should be examined by more than one person of senior status, and such people should have knowledge of the 1976 Race Relations Act. At the broader institutional level the CRE recommended that higher

education bodies should develop extensive monitoring mechanisms that deal with student access, student retention, and student degree performance. The problem with the CRE's recommendations is that it assumes that senior members of staff will behave in a fair and responsible manner, and that the higher education bodies will actually implement such changes in a climate where resources are being selectively allocated.

The issues in this investigation draw into focus the importance of 'race' equality legislation, as part of the equality of access debates, particularly the publication of the CRE's Code of Practice (1989). This code was endorsed by the then Secretary of State for Education, John Macgregor, who stated that:

> **The CRE Code of Practice in Education makes an important contribution. I recommend it in particular to schools and college governing bodies as they assume their important new powers and duties under the Education Reform Act (CRE, 1989: 5).**

The code covered pre-school, school, further and higher education, but for the purposes of this review the last of these will be discussed. The code cited the 'Race' Relations Act which made it unlawful to discriminate against an individual, directly or indirectly on the grounds of race in the field of education. Direct discrimination is described by the code as treating a person on racial grounds less favourably than others are, or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. The case of the medical school would be seen as direct discrimination.

According to the CRE, indirect discrimination occurs: **'where a requirement or condition which, although applied equally to all racial groups, is such that a considerably smaller proportion of a racial group cannot comply with it and cannot be shown to be justifiable other than on racial grounds' (CRE, 1989: 9).**

An example of this can be seen in the case of a school who insisted on children wearing a cap as part of school uniform. This discriminated against sikh boys whose religion required them to wear a turban. The code stated that it was unlawful for higher education institutions to discriminate in terms of admissions; accepting applications, access to benefits, facilities or services or exclusion from establishments. The code did acknowledge that admissions criteria may vary both within and between further and higher educational establishments.

It was further argued in the code that it was unlawful to refuse to admit applicants on racial grounds, or to expect black students to have better qualifications than others. However, the problem with this is that if an institution can 'justify' their admissions, or assessment criteria and show that it is not in excess of the knowledge deemed necessary to complete the course, then it is not breaking the law. In short this provision does not account for the fact that many black people may not have access to even minimum entry qualifications, due to structural racism previously encountered in the education system.

From the material reviewed so far in this chapter, it is clear that many higher educational institutions prefer the 'traditional A level candidate', who is more likely to be white than black. The problem with the code is that its guidelines are not really amenable to deal with the day to day forms of subtle and unsubtle racism that can range from verbal abuse to being unfairly graded.

The reports outlined above saw policy change revolving around the need for workable equal opportunities policies backed up by race relations legislation that higher educational institutions would take more seriously. The literature in this section also gave graphic examples of the kinds of racial discrimination suffered by many black students in such institutions.

The Black Experience of Access

The literature identified in this section deals with examples of the way mainstream educational bodies fund small scale studies that provide a small space for the black perspective to be heard.

The aim of the Further Education Unit's Black Students and Entry to Higher Education (1986) was to investigate the quality of black student experiences in the light of Access opportunities in further and higher education. The central theme of the report concerned the preparation of black students for higher education and the curicula responses of higher educational bodies to black students. Both semi-structured and structured questionnaires were sent to thirteen higher educational institutions that

received access courses from local further education colleges. It was interesting that only nine institutions responded. This could perhaps reflect the priority that many institutions give to racial equalities issues. The report indicated that two institutions had no specific policy on access, while seven claimed to have a formalised policy on recruitment of students through access routes, but only three could demonstrate the impact of their policies on recruiting more black students.

While all nine institutions spoke of the importance of 'special Access' arrangements for black people, in line with equal opportunities, only three could demonstrate their commitment. The FEU, like the CNAA and UDACE report's, found that African-Caribbean students were concentrated in curriculum areas of the Social Sciences, Community Studies and Youth Work. The study noted the uneven practices related to Access development, with some institutions accepting the Access certificate, while others required interviews, diagnostic tests, even if students had already passed the access course. From its deliberations with black students the report argued that most of the students felt that the curriculum was not negotiated in any real sense.

The report found that the black students saw ant-racism as being central to the curriculum. It was also clear from some members of staff that they perceived racism as being a 'black problem' and were not aware of its pervasive yet subtle presence in their own institutions. The study highlighted the lack of black staff as a central issue that sent messages to black students. It was argued that although some of the institutions

had been receiving black access students for at least 3 years, there was no data on final degree performance of such students. It was also observed that 6 out of 9 institutions had no special support mechanisms. Evidence from student interviews suggested that black students formed their own informal support systems, often using staff from the access course, or contacting black professionals from the community. A more formalised version of this can be seen in the formation of the Mentor Scheme, which pairs black students with black professionals to help guide and support the student on their course of study.

In its recommendations the report called for further research in how black students respond to the inflexibility and ethnocentric knowledge of the higher educational curriculum. There were calls for a more radical implementation of anti-racist practices that would cover black student recruitment, retention, destination, staff development, black staff recruitment and community involvement. This report clearly illustrated the failure of higher education to positively reflect black student experience.

In (1991) a Report, funded by T.E.E.D, was published by John Bird et al called Widening Access to Higher Education for Black People. The report was primarily concerned with the relationships between higher education, schools and communities, and the experiences of black students in schools and higher education. Bird's report highlighted some of the barriers that blocked black progression to higher education.

These included the lack of information about higher education; lack of liaison between higher educational institutions and schools with significant numbers of black students; discriminatory practices in higher education; lack of support for black students in higher education and the need for black students to form their own black support groups to deal with isolation. Bird's report also evaluated the effectiveness of ethnic monitoring in a sample of institutions there findings suggested that:

> **simple counting of students on entry and exit- what can be called enumeration- was inadequate. This was largely because many of the problems which black students face are faced during their time in institutions. Thus, ethnic monitoring would have to include detailed monitoring of the black experience of higher education and monitoring of post-higher education employment. This monitoring would include both quantitative and qualitative monitoring and would have implications across the wide range of processes-admissions practices, assessment, delivery of course, curriculum and such like (Bird et al, 1991: 152).**

The FEU study along with John Bird's report was an important landmark, as it sought to take into account more fully the views of black students themselves along with the important issue of monitoring such students. It is in this area of black student experience that this study is firmly set. It is an attempt to fill the gap in the area of qualitative research concerning the complex interplay of black students in white educational structures.

It should be clear from the literature discussed so far in this chapter that there appear to be competing discourses of 'access'

going on around demography, the labour market, admissions, equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and black access and experiences. In the final section of this chapter I will try to throw some light on the competing discourses of access by focusing on the ideological construction of the access debate.

1.7 Ideology and Access

It should be clear from the literature identified so far in this chapter that the whole concept of 'access' is problematic it can be used as a justification for policy initiatives by educationalists on the left and right, as Waddington (1989) argues:

> **The term "Access" has the great political virtue of meaning different things to different people. For some, it appears to be reducible to a simple issue of total quantity of students in the HE system, and as the key therefore to resources. For others, the Access issue is regarded as fundamentally about the extension and equalisation of opportunities to underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; within this perspective qualitative considerations are as important as quantitative ones. Although these two crudely drawn perspectives may frequently be combined, they are not necessarily congruent within the same policy framework (Waddington, 1989: 3).**

Waddington's quote correctly points to the fact that an ideological war of competing definitions of access is continually being fought. The vagueness of the concept has left it open to be reinterpreted and reconstructed, particularly by the government and higher educational institutions. Parry (1989) refers to this reinterpretation as the over-determination of the access notion and the undertheorization of the access field. My aim in this section is to show the way in which particular writers have understood and articulated the 'ideology of access'.

Griffin (1983) identifies the ideological function of access, in the way that it focuses on the notion of 'provision' rather than 'curriculum', as he states:

> **For the problem of access is seen primarily in terms of the access of individuals (either as such or else as members of particular groups) to learning opportunities, the barriers to which are constituted in wholly material terms. In fact barriers to access are collectively as much as individually experienced and culturally as well as materially constructed, and the paradox lies in confronting the individual learner with the problem of the socially and culturally constructed contents of learning. All the barriers likely to be experienced in these circumstances are equally real, but access does seem to be conceptualized in terms which ignore the cultural barriers, which isolate and abstract the individual learner, and which tend to reduce the issue to one wholly resolvable in technical and institutional terms. There is little sense here that access to education might be a collective and political issue of knowledge and power in society (Griffin, 1983: 8).**

One can see how an institutional ideology of access can operate by narrowing the debate down to a notion of 'flexibility' and 'transferability'. This ideology denies the cultural resistance of elite institutions and it denies the real effect of the historical exclusion of black people. It also seeks to pretend that educational innovation can be made to work without the deconstruction of traditional curriculum categories and contents. Crucial questions of curriculum control are depoliticised by what Griffin calls the professional ideology of access.

Another aspect of access ideology is highlighted in the work of Parry (1989); Neave (1982b) Schuller, Tight and Weil, (1988). Parry talks about the importance of boundary management and

control. He argues that an elite system of higher education has required the maintenance of a strong boundary between itself and other sources of learning in order to protect the qualities invested in 'higher education', as he states:

> **The boundary has reinforced a notion of discontinuity and distance from other forms of learning, yet arrangements for crossing the boundary have assumed continuity and articulation. The tensions and ambiguities which accompany this paradox may be observed in relation to the way alternative access arrangements for non-traditional students are conducted and negotiated at the boundary. Stripped of the screen and the convenience of the A-level 'standard' and the buffer of the formal examination and entry system, the boundary becomes much more vulnerable to ideas which probe the tacit nature of much of higher education (Parry, 1989: 15).**

Boundary management is a useful concept which helps to explore the ideological basis underpinning the development of particular institutional access programmes. Within this conceptualization of access developments, Parry (1989) suggests that it is possible to draw distinctions between (a) those access arrangements that operate on the boundary, (b) those that stand outside the boundary, (c) those that operate near to the boundary, (d)those that mediate the boundary. Examples of (a) include Direct Entry and Open Entry. Open entry particularly has been geared to part-time students and has been extensively operated by the Open University in its first come first serve policy which has particularly disadvantaged black people, as discussed in the first part of this chapter.

The route of open entry has recruited many students without formal qualifications, but has also had high rates of student

attrition, which suggests the need for more counselling and academic support, or the need to alter the presentation, content and delivery of their distance learning material. Within the public sector direct entry has historically been used as a way of processing those without traditional A levels, i.e. BTEC students and those with no virtually no qualifications. In the past the CNAA imposed a quota of 10% for those students entering higher education through that route. There is evidence that this route is being used increasingly by institutions in a selective rather than a diverse way (Fulton & Ellwood, 1989).

Examples of those arrangements that stand outside the boundary (b), include programmes that are offered one or two years full-time. These programmes are run by self-directed learning colleges such as Fircroft, Ruskin and Hillcroft. Such Community Colleges have a philosophy that believes in self-discovery and enrichment of the individual and education for life. However, the problem for such institutions is deciding whether their access arrangements are there to help facilitate the student in terms of self-awareness or as a calculated preparation for advanced study in higher education. Lieven (1987) argues the latter interpretation of access arrangements will lead to:

> **a more instrumental and problematic role for the institution preparing students for a system not noted for its responsiveness to the needs, values and aspirations of working class people. A curriculum defined solely in the context of a college can focus on the interests, needs and methods appropriate to the consistency of that college. Once entry into higher education becomes an explicit and primary aim, then a training in the rituals and differentiating hurdles of higher education becomes essential and defining component of the college**

> **curriculum. The process might be very good at getting people into higher education, but it does not look like much of an alternative,radical or otherwise (Lieven, 1987: 20).**

Examples of access arrangements that operate near the boundary (c), tend to offer mainly part-time courses, usually validated by two higher education institutions. The courses offer lateral diversity for students to plot their own educational pathway with more flexibility. Such programmes are offered by the various Open College federations which validate courses at different levels. The ethos on Open College courses is geared more for adult learners, once over the confidence hurdle, are allowed to do their own thing and mould their study plans to fit their life plans. In this situation it is the Open College that designs the courses.

Examples of arrangements that mediate the boundary (d), have been the development of the linked Access Course which combines the principles of targeting, collaboration and Progression. Access Courses are largely a feature of the further education environment and are mainly a bottom-up development, often initiated by individuals at section and department level. Underlying the development of Access courses has been the acknowledgement of the failure of existing access arrangements to vastly increase the participation of black adults without formal qualifications. The FEU (1987) argued that role of an Access Course is to challenge the underrepresentation of:

> **Those groups who have been least well-served by the school system and who face particular barriers to entry to higher education. These include ethnic minorities, especially the black communities;women, especially those who, through early parenthood or the need to work,**

> **had to abandon their education; and working class adults, especially the unemployed, whose talents may not have been fully recognized at the secondary stage (FEU, 1987: 22).**

Boundary management offers us a tool to evaluate the theoretical dimensions of access debates. It points to the fact that although institutional access programmes are able to breach the higher education boundary at given points, the socio-educational advancement of a 'race' or class in terms of mass participation is mitigated by the control that higher education can impose due to the unequal relationship it enjoys with access providing bodies. It must be added that these competing 'access arrangements' are not by any means mutually exclusive,and their ideological practices do overlap and indeed do interlock in particular contexts.

Indeed, it is noticeable in more recent times there has been a move by the Access Course Recognition Group (ARCG) to create a framework of recognition for Access Courses. The actual implementation of recognition is to be done through Authorised Validation Agencies (AVAs) by awarding a kitemark to access providers. This new arrangement is designed to 'maintain standards' and supposedly give Access Courses wider appeal. In 1989 the CVCP and CNAA argued that the role of the framework was to:

> **Support and extend opportunities for students' admission to higher education, whilst safeguarding the risk of erosion of standards. The purpose is to encourage staff in higher education to be more prepared to admit students from Access Courses, and students themselves to be more confident of obtaining a place. The arrangements should enable individual Access Courses to achieve a wide basis of acceptability and currency for entry to all higher education institutions (Davies and Parry, 1992: 44).**

The apparent recognition of Access Courses in this context is still tinged with the notion that such courses are still a 'poor relation' in comparison with 'A' levels, thus they must 'prove' that they are a 'quality product'. Indeed, many Access students have continued to express concern about the perceived low status of Access Courses within higher education institutions and its additional linkage to 'low achieving black students' (Rosen, 1990; Lyon, 1993). Connolly (1991) makes the point that the ARCG is predominantly comprised of representatives from higher education and goes on to argue that their ownership of the Access framework will constrain the challenge which Access Courses might make to the dominant model. Indeed some would argue that a deliberate institutionalisation and deradicalisation of Access Courses is the hidden agenda by the ARCG to 'manage' Access (Kearney and Diamond 1990). Benn (1993) adds further weight to this view by arguing that:

> **There is on-going criticism that the framework has, by its very existence, raised barriers. For example some applicants to higher education may be directed by admissions tutors to a full Access Course even when this is an inappropriate form of provision. Meanwhile, courses that do nor meet the (ACRG) criteria for approval as Access Courses but which empower students in a similar way, may be either molded to fit the definition or excluded from Schedule 2 and/or the LEA's Discretionary grant system. In the process of gaining national acceptance, it is arguable that some Access Courses have lost their original, radical purpose and have been used by both Government and higher education institutions for their several purposes. As a result of validation, Access Courses may establish a new form of barrier. Rather than changing higher education to suit a more diverse student body, is Access molding the student? (Benn, 1993: 58).**

Clearly, the issue of boundary management in this context helps to explain more fully the concrete application of institutional policy in this field.

At this point in the discussion it is useful to draw upon the work of an American writer, David Karen. Karen (1989) looks at how elite colleges in America use gatekeeping tactics to ensure that they get the candidates they want. The relevance of Karen's work to the debate on ideology of access and its practical outcomes, is that all the access arrangements discussed so far can only come to function through admissions policies operated by a educational institutions. In setting out his argument Karen states that:

> **In deciding how to distribute scarce resources, concrete organisations will use some set of criteria...for choosing one individual over another...we must analyse the organisational maintenance of specific selection criteria and see these criteria as a function of the interests of various groups...(Karen, 1989: 227).**

It could be argued that it is through such processes of selection and rejection that higher educational 'boundaries' are maintained; individuals and teams consciously create typologies of the kinds of students that will fit into a given institution, as Karen states;

> **At the same time, one must recognise that a people-processing bureaucracy must develop standard operating procedures with their implied openness and universalism -to deal with the mass of applications that it is charged to administer. Struggles over classification mediate these two levels of analysis, yielding the categories that gatekeepers use-both bureaucratically and perceptually-to process applications. The classification struggles and standard operating procedures set bounds on the discretion of individual gatekeepers in making their selections (Karen, 1989: 229).**

The central point being made is that the process of admissions is about individuals making decisions about others abilities. It is a structural and institutional process that has its own political mechanics. Thus if we consider the case of the medical school as discussed earlier in this chapter, whose computerised admissions system was discriminating against black applicants, the computer programme was only reproducing the discriminatory practices that had been the the orthodoxy for years. It is in this way that the system for recruitment can become a hidden arena for racist decision-making especially in higher education with its narrow academic system of secondary school qualifications.

If we turn our attention to higher education in Britain we see that most admissions are processed through the clearing-house system of UCCA or PCAS. These two bodies in varying degrees reflect the reliance on 'A' levels as the main selection criterion reinforced through the norm of competitive entry. The Fulton Report (1989) discussed earlier in this chapter showed the extent to which 'A' levels were still viewed as a guarantee of quality in higher education entrants, and The White Paper on Education and Training for the 21st Century (DES 1991) demonstrated the government's stance on the selective 'A' level system which states that: **'The Government is committed to maintaining 'A' levels and the standards they represent...' (Reeves and Frankel, 1991: 126).** This is despite all the educational research which has criticised 'A' levels as being too narrow and specialised (Wagner, 1989).

In their discussion of access strategies and ideologies, Reeves and Frankel (1991) argue that:

> **To change an elitist and highly selective educational structure into a mass participatory one, it is necessary to maximise the number of participants, the duration of the participation and to sustain and improve achievement levels. Simultaneously, the resource implications of expanding provision results in questions of effectiveness and efficiency appearing high on the organisational agenda, for clearly,for example, the speed with which the educational objectives can be achieved -the throughput -is crucial to the cost. In the broadest sense, therefore, the educational access movement embraces the practical attempts to convert the traditional, highly exclusive education system into a universally inclusive one (Reeves and Frankel, 1991:126).**

The problem with this view is that it partly mirrors the government's utilisation of access, which is based on the philosophy of "rapid expansion on the cheap, and more bums on seats". It fails to touch upon the ideological manipulation of access where competing educational philosophies are subsumbed and obscured under the apparently benign concept of 'access', neither does it question the role of the access movement which in some ways has narrowed down the social goals of access policy into depoliticised institutional objectives. Reeves and Frankel argue that the notion of access can refer to programmes generally aimed at improving the participation level in education of the mass of population or of underrepresented target groups such as women, racial minorities, or the disabled. They also argue that it can refer more specifically to providing a 'bridging element' to improve entry of individuals or targeted groups into higher education or employment. They suggest that 'access' with a small 'a' relates to

increasing the take-up of, and progression through, all educational programmes in a college.

This notion of access with a small 'a' is firmly rooted within a local community, with its emphasis on initial take-up of education and achievement, progression and destination. This conception of access, to varying degrees, has been developed by adult and further educational institutions alongside other programmes. But crucially, it this notion of access that most higher education institutions have largely ignored.

The second notion of 'Access' with a big 'A' is primarily concerned with raising the educational level of individuals following an Access programme to progress to higher education. The key assumption that underpins this view of Access is the right to compete on 'equal terms' with others for a position at a higher level in education or employment, and this will only work if the standard attained by the student is considered to be equivalent to 'A' level.

Reeves and Frankel argue that within the two broad distinctions outlined above, it is possible to distinguish between access brought about by *increasing* the *service*, access brought about by providing a new service and access brought about by running a *parallel service.* Educational access brought about by increasing the service may allow resources to be reallocated so the amount of given places on a course could be doubled. An access initiative could also be created by providing a new service that might be based away from the institution in a community centre. An

example of a parallel service would be an Access course explicitly designed to meet the needs of black students.

It should be clear from the arguments discussed so far that the concept of "access" can refer to a spectrum of ideological and policy orientated initiatives. This complexity helps to mask important issues about how further and higher education institutions are really responding to the needs of the black population. In their conclusion, Reeves and Frankel argue quite rightly that in without an agreed definitions and more empirical research, the precise nature of the relationship between Access (1) and Access (2) remains unclear and inconclusive (Reeves and Frankel, 1991).

Lieven (1989) has also tried to create a theoretical framework for understanding the concept of access. He argues that four kinds of ideological positions exist. They are as follows; the traditional liberal commitment to providing equal opportunities for individual self-fulfilment; the radical commitment to transferring resources to and empowering disadvantaged groups in society; the institutional priority of survival of further and higher education institutions in a climate of industrial and technological change and demographic decline; and a vocational strand which is part of a government strategy for retraining the adult population into areas of work where there is a shortage of recruits.

Lieven's framework is a useful tool for understanding particular positions on access, but I would argue that the ideological positions of three and four are currently in ascendency and are

setting the parameters of access debates. But equally, the failure by the liberal reformists to challenge and change the ethos and ideology of higher education, created a vacuum which was filled by the now dominant market approach. Liberal reforms of admissions policy and minor curicula changes may have helped to facilitate the entry of more individuals into higher education, but it has not challenged the cultural and structural barriers that face certain students before and when they get there; barriers of an elitist system in an unequal society.

Reflecting on the procedures and criteria that are used to recruit the vast majority of entrants to full-time higher education, it is hard not to resist Neave's (1985) conclusion that: **'in short, mass higher education in Britain is elite higher education written a little larger' (Parry, 1989: 9).** The implications for those without formal qualifications thus become limited to selected and controlled 'access arrangements' either, outside, on or through the boundary, and so, taken together admissions policies and their reliance on A level points scores maintains a selective and ideological tradition. In his conclusion, Karen quoting Offe, (1975) states that:

> **..the filtering mechanisms of state policies seems to be appropriate for educational and probably other decisions about selection. These filters exclude policies or candidates that would be inappropriate for the state or university, yielding finalists, the admission of whom would not have deleterious effects on the institution (Karen, 1989: 235).**

The discussions so far have focussed on national debates and official educational discourses of black student access and the ideological tensions that underpin them. The aim of the next section is to refine these educational discourses around access into specific models of access. These more precise theoretical models can then be used in later chapters to underpin the empirical study of the access of black students in a particular institution.

1.8 Models of Access

The literature reviewed in this chapter has brought together a variety of governmental and quasi-governmental publications on access. In this section I will attempt to draw together some of the themes and assumptions prevalent in such literature, by organising the material around three tentative models of access. These are the market oriented access model, the social justice access model, and the social engineering access model. These will be presented not as accurate reflections of reality but as 'ideal types' in order to probe reality.

To a large extent all of us create working constructs of the way in which the social world operates. These constructs enable us in our everyday lives to place 'isolated' events into a wider context. But most of the time such constructs remain implicit; rarely do we think about them consciously, let alone subject them to critical examination.

The construct of a model constitutes a mechanism of selection by the analyst to avoid drowning in a sea of information. Thus in the case of the various access discourses, models can be used to

evaluate similarities and disparities between the tone and stance of the assumptions and ideologies. Ponton & Gill (1982) identify three basic functions of models. Firstly, they argue that models help to organise disjointed data into a coherent pattern where significant relationships can be demonstrated. Secondly they argue that models can perform a heuristic function in suggesting other significant relationships which might be worth researching further. Thirdly, the model may also have a predictive function in suggesting future developments based on identifiable characteristics.

Weber first drew attention to 'ideal type' constructions in order to make explicit the procedures by which social scientists formulate general, abstract concepts such as the 'pure competitive market'. Weber argues that while a perfectly competitive market may not exist in reality, such an ideal type can have heuristic and explanatory value in theories of economic behaviour. The points that Weber makes on this topic have relevance for the development of my own models of access:

> **We have in abstract theory an illustration of those synthetic constructs which have been designated as *'ideas'* of historical phenomena. It offers us an ideal picture of events on the commodity-market under conditions of a society organized on principles of an exchange economy, free competition and rigourously rational conduct. This conceptual pattern brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex, which is conceived as an internally consistent system. Substantively, this construct in itself is like a utopia which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality. Its relationship to the empirical data consists solely in the fact that where market- conditioned relationships of the type referred to by the abstract construct are discovered or suspected to exist in reality to some extent, we can make the characteristic features of**

> **this relationship pragmatically clear and understandable by reference to an ideal type...This procedure can be indispensable for heuristic as well as expository purposes. The ideal type concept will help to develop our skill in imputation in research: it is no 'hypothesis' but offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses...An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (Butterworth and Weir, 1972: 64).**

In my own case, ideal type models of access have been developed from the literature review to 'test' the nature of the empirical study of chosen courses in terms of their structure and ethos.

1.9 Market Oriented Access model.

Reports like Meeting The Challenge (1987), Widening of Access To HE (1989), The Fulton Report, (1989) and Aspects of HE in the United States (1989) all put forward a particular notion of access, a notion which links the idea of wider participation in education to the economic demands of a more skilled labour-force. Here the main discourses about educational access revolve around increasing student participation rates in particular subject areas such as Science and Technology. There is also a concern about the occupational destination of students, due to the vocational ethos of this model. Thus higher educational institutions are expected to put into place effective monitoring procedures or 'performance indicators' to test the 'success' of their graduates on their courses and more importantly in the labour-market. There is a tendency with this model to equate 'equality' with 'efficiency', in terms of 'good management practices'. It thus argues that black people who

share in common with other groups social and economic disadvantage will benefit positively from the permeation of general access policies. The central assumption that underpins this model is that HE institutions need to develop a more managerial and business like style in terms of their service delivery. This is linked to the view that in the past HE institutions have tended to waste their resources.

This model starts from the view that educational provision is inextricably linked to the national economy, and that the curriculum and the needs of student cohorts should reflect the activity of the economic market place. Thus it seeks to apply the 'enterprise culture' to education, particularly further and higher education.

Within this model a high priority is given to the needs of industry and of setting up partnerships with local and national employers. A specific example of government intervention into HE, was the launching of its Enterprise into Higher Education project in 1988. Here specific funds were offered to institutions to establish Enterprise Units in various higher education institutions. The idea was that managerial methods and new proactive teaching practices would filter down and become embedded in each institution. The central problem with particular notion of educational access is that it simply does not tackle the fact that there is unequal opportunity to participate and succeed in educational structures, along the lines of race, gender and disability.

The market model glosses over the implications of taking more students, without the necessary resources to give students a meaningful experience. The concern is only about accessing certain numbers of students needed by particular sections of the economy. Here, 'access' becomes a commodity to be bought and sold. This model does contain contradictory elements in that it advocates increasing student numbers, then echoes concern about the possible high wastage of student drop-out brought about by widening access to 'particular groups'.

This model has succeeded in defining educational access in a way that is compatible with the rationale of the free market. But often what goes unnoticed is the way that this model has also redefined the essence of 'positive' action programmes by offering interventionist short term education and 'training' to the 'disadvantaged' in areas of skill shortage fairly narrowly defined. Positive action as conceived in this model, accepts the need to remove the effects of past discrimination, but does not believe in giving black people favourable treatment in direct competition in areas of education and employment, as interpreted under Sections (37) and (38) of the 1976 Race Relations Act. Positive discrimination which is linked to the creation of quotas for particular groups is only legal when a job is designated as requiring a particular group representative eg. a black person, thus 'culture' and 'understanding' is treated as a genuine occupational qualification. If the principle of 'positive action' is related to education, then the role of black only courses to teaching and social work is seen as only transitory measure, while 'fair' competition is achieved through other access routes.

1.10 Social Justice Access Model

This model focuses on the need for higher education to become more responsive to students with educational and social disadvantages. This ethos can be identified in literature published by NAB and the Open University and joint publications by the CNAA and Wolverhampton Polytechnic. The central view enshrined in this perspective is that higher education should give credit to a variety of experiences and try to develop student's skills and capacities to the full. Emphasis therefore is placed on the 'students ability to benefit' from a course of study rather than the possession of traditional qualifications. The model is explicit in the targeting of specific groups through deliberate manipulation of selection requirements in the pursuit of proportionality. This model recognises the need to develop more flexible routes of entry to facilitate different kinds of students. This model focuses on the variety of subject areas that institutions have to offer and gives students opportunity to put together more individualised course programmes. Within this model, the vocational aspects of course programmes are not explicit the breadth and depth of subject area are given more emphasis than specific occupational outcome.

Within this model there is a belief that the higher education curriculum should be student-centred and importantly, there is a commitment to equal opportunities for those groups of people

who are disadvantaged by 'race', class, gender and disability. In conjunction with this is the view that higher education institutions should place more emphasis upon confidence building for such students and redressing past imbalances.

There is also a recognition that institutional barriers exist and need to be tackled. While the Social Justice Model is also concerned to increase student numbers, more emphasis is placed on the 'quality' of experience that students will receive with little reference to vocational outcomes.

1.11 Social Engineering Access Model.

This model has links with the Market Oriented Model in terms of its explicit vocational objectives. The central characteristics of this model can be traced back to the CRE in 1974, when it made recommendations to higher educational institutions that they should think positively about recruiting black students to become professionals. This call was further strengthened by a Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration which met in 1976. The committee acknowledged that there was a scarcity of black teachers in schools, this was evident in schools with a high concentration of black children.

The government's Green paper, Education in Schools (1977) and the White paper, The West-Indian Community (1978) reinforced the findings of the Select Committee. The centre-piece of this model was constructed on the 2nd of August 1978, when the DES published letters addressed to seven LEA's recommending that

they establish pilot preparatory courses (Access Courses) in an attempt to recruit more black teachers. A key premise that has underpinned this model has been the belief that more black teachers in schools will act as role models for black pupils. This model, like the market oriented access model is directly interventionist in that it seeks to create access to specific vocational occupations such as Social Work and Teaching. This model still places a great deal of emphasis on traditional entry requirements, but does make places available for students who have passed Access to Teaching Courses. The subject areas within this model are tied to the application of teaching, that reflect educational theory and classroom practice. Thus the actual breadth of subjects tends to be far more linear than the social justice model.

It should be realised that the three models outlined so far are not totally separate constructs. Infact all three are very fluid and at given points and social contexts, may actually merge. They do also share certain characteristics in common for ideologically they promote the view that access to higher educational structures is mostly unproblematic. They also disguise the wider social control aspects of institutional 'boundary management'.

The aim of this chapter has been to explore official educational discourses that have developed around black student access which have been visable in contemporary literature on educational access. I have also attempted to illustrate the ideological aspects of access discourses by examining competing definitions of educational access provided by certain authors. Finally I have

outlined three models of access that reflect key aspects of the educational discourses discussed previously. In Chapter Two an attempt will be made to outline the theoretical position of the author and discuss the methodological problems of engaging in such research.

CHAPTER 2. THE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE.

> **..the early 1970s had seen the emergence of blacks writing on their own realities and questioning the values and methods that white sociologists were using on them. Already in 1969 Sivanandan had written a critique of liberalism in the Institute's Newsletter, which showed up the contradictions of the liberal position and especially its commitment to peaceful change in the face of issues which were no longer capable of resolution within the existing structure of society...This report, with later works as Dilip Hiro's Black British White British (1971) was to tell white academics quite firmly that their role as interpreter was over. (Bourne and Sivanandan, 1980: 339).**

The aim of this chapter is to outline the author's theoretical position on the need for black researchers to write on their own realities. I will then discuss important issues around terminology, then I will explain my choice of methodology and outline the specific methodological techniques used in the study. Finally I will explain the institutional context of the study by drawing on local and national quantitative data on black participation in higher education.

Several writers such as Sivanandan (1982) and Lawrence (1982) have criticised white sociologists for creating distorted stereotypes of black people. Lawrence in particular points to such misrepresentations in the work of Patterson (1965), and Cashmore and Troyna (1982). Whilst recognising that the study of black people by white sociologists need not inevitably be racist, the problem is that theories of racial oppression on which some

research has rested have been based on definitions and assumptions which in some way pathologise black people and the communities they came from.

Much of white sociological research has limited itself to the study of black people rather than racist social processes.[1] It can be further argued that some research has presented a distorted picture of the experiences of black people by treating them as 'things' or 'objects' to be studied. This point is succinctly expressed by Bourne and Sivanandan (1980) when they state that:

> **...It was not black people who should be examined, but white society; it was not a question of educating blacks and whites for integration, but of fighting institutional racism; it was not race relations that was the field of study but racism. (Bourne and Sivanandan, 1980: 339).**

Central to this methodological debate has been the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Wendy Ball (1989) has discussed whether the researcher and the respondent have to be the same gender, or have to share the same racial background, in order to elicit usable data without alienating or indeed exploiting the powerlessness that tends to be inherent in most research processes. In the final analysis, Ball concludes that race and gender do not need to be matched and that researcher sensitivity is really what counts.

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1. I use the term 'white sociology' in the same way as Lawrence (1982), '..in recognition of the historical conditions and circumstances within which the various 'fields' of sociology have developed.....it is necessary to emphasise the patriarchal nature of 'white sociology'...notions about what the 'family' is or ought to be' are examples of this pathology. (Lawrence, 1982: 134).

However, I feel that 'sensitivity' alone may not enable the researcher to tap into or adequately make sense of particular ways of seeing the world from a black or female perspective. In terms of 'race' one must take into account the level, or proximity in terms of the cultural exposure to forms of racism. The quality of research into the issue of race can be improved by the interpretation and perspective brought by black scholars (Lashley, 1986). Lawrence supports this view when he states:

> **What we are arguing here is not so much that white bourgeois sociologists cannot study black proletarian people, although much of what we have read may incline us towards such a view, but the more important point we wish to make is that none of these researchers actually take into account the extent to which their relationship to their respondents may be structured by racism (Lawrence, 1981: 9).**

In the area of race related research, it is therefore equally important for both black and white researchers to acknowledge that their ideological positions are shaped by their cultural and unique experiences. As a post-graduate student of African-Caribbean origin who had entered higher education as a mature student, I was able to identify greatly with the individuals who were the main focus of the study. Both the researcher and the researched largely enjoyed a shared context for their experiences, which allowed more intimacy.

The issues raised so far in this section are of crucial importance for me as a black researcher operating in a white institution, researching black experiences in higher education. The methodological position I have adopted is one that focuses on black student experience as a vehicle for critically evaluating the

rationale, meaning and justification of educational access policies, as provided by a particular institution of higher education. The essence of my research perspective is to investigate white institutional access initiatives, in the form of specific courses, through the subjective experience of black students.

I believe this stand-point is required to counteract much of the existing research which all too often has been based on assumptions or definitions which pathologise black people. The concept of stand-point theory has been developed by feminists who have tried to construct knowledge based on women's experiences of oppression (Harstock, 1983; Harding, 1986). Patricia Hill Collins (1991) has argued that within the overarching structure of stand-point theory, there exists an independent black feminist epistemology which is based on a distinct set of experiences. I therefore utilise the concept of stand-point in the context of this study to indicate the existence of a partially independent black system of knowledge validation rooted in historico- cultural concrete beliefs. I would not suggest that this system of knowledge validation is uniformly adhered to by all black academics or even that all black academics fully recognise its existence, but I would suggest that the evidence contained in this study along with my own experiences does point to a plurality of lived experiences. I agree with Gilroy (1987), when he argues that we as black people should reject the central image of ourselves as victims, and install instead an alternative conception which sees us as an active force working in many different ways for our freedom from racial subordination. In view of this, my research is a conscious vehicle for the articulation of black voices.

2.1 Terminology

I will now turn my attention to the terminology that will be used in the study. Throughout the study the term black will be used to refer to people of African-Caribbean and Asian origin. The afore mentioned terms will be used only when differentiation is necessary. It is worth mentioning that research has been carried out on the experience of 'South Asian' students in British Universities by Krutika Tanna, (1987). This research pointed to racial discrimination operating in higher education and in the graduate labour-market. My research sample will include both African-Caribbean and asian students although the various patterns of participation on particular courses may create imbalances.

My use of the term black does not suggest that the black community is or would ever be a united political front, or that 'black consciousness' is evenly distributed within the black community. It is clear that divisions along such lines as class, gender, age, religion and culture do exist. But it is also clear that such divisions can become exaggerated through political, economic and social manipulation. However, the reality is that racism exists and its potent force is most felt by those people who are non-white.

In many government publications and much educational literature the term 'ethnic minority' is used rather than black. I will not use the term 'ethnic minority' because it has an implicit association

with inferiority in terms of cultural beliefs. As a term I believe it is insulting due to the fact that many dictionaries refer to it as meaning 'heathen'. Also in a more political context its use as a blanket term serves to depoliticise and marginalise the serious issue of racism by placing too much emphasis on 'ethnicity' and not enough on the structural dimension of racial disadvantage suffered, due to ones colour. I therefore use the term black in a political sense because I believe it accurately reflects the material and social position of black people in white society, and because it indicates the common experience of racism shared by non-white people.

2.2 Racism

Due to the nature of the study a key concept will appear throughout will be 'racism'. Racism can be described as the subjugation of one racial group by another on the basis of an assumed superiority of one over the other, with the dominating group having the power, or indeed the access to power to establish and maintain a system of domination. The term racism can cover both individual and structural attitudes and behaviour, as Naguib argues:

> **Racism.....refers to institutions and procedures as well as to the actions of individuals and to the unconscious and unintentional effects and consequences as well as to the deliberate purposes. It summarises all attitudes, procedures and social patterns whose effect (though not necessarily whose conscious intention) is to create and maintain power, influence and well-being of white people at the expense of black people and whose further function is simultaneously to limit the latter to the poorest life chances and living conditions, the most menial work and the greatest likelihood of unemployment and under-employment. In order to combat and counter racism the starting point is**

> **not whether it exists but an awareness of how it manifests itself and to what effect (Naguib, 1985: 36).**

Writers such as Miles and Phizacklea (1979; 1984) have argued that any understanding of how racism operates must be set in terms of the historical and material conditions which give rise to the process of 'racialization'. They suggest that in contemporary society, the specific historical and material condition associated with this process is the use of migrant labour by capitalist societies. This is at the root of the racialization process and has resulted in what they call the formation of Black people as a racialized fraction of the working class. Central to Miles and Phizacklea's argument is the view that 'races' do not exist as discrete biological entities, but are social constructions used by policy-makers, politicians and others as a way of constructing differences in such a manner that suggests the problem lie with black people, when infact the problem is white racism. Miles and Phizacklea maintain that the understanding of racism must be located in the historical and material conditions in which migrant labour is used by captialist societies. Thus they see the economic dynamic as being at the root of the racialization process.

Other social theorists writing from a neo-marxist perspective such as Hall et al (1978) and the authors of The Empire Strikes Back (1982), have focused on the different historical variations in the relationship between capitalism and 'race', and the relatively autonomous existence of racism within the social relations of capitalism. This approach points to Britains economic decline in

the late 1970s and the 'racialization' of state policies as a reaction to this crisis, as the authors state:

> **First, we belive that it is not possible to understand the complex ways in which state racism works in British society without looking closely at the ways in which it is reproduced inside and outside state apparatuses. Second, we feel that it is not possible to see racism as a unitary fixed principle which remains the same in different historical conjunctures. Such a static view, which is common in many sociological approaches, cannot explain how racism is a contradictory phenomenon which is constantly transformed, along with the wider political-economic structures and relations of the social formation (CCCS, 1982: 11).**

This perspective then tries to present a 'moving picture' analysis of race and racism through which class relations are experienced. However, there is a tendency in this kind of neo-marxist writing to explain the existence of racism as a consequence of the workings and requirements and requirements of capitalism. Although they do acknowledge the 'relative autonomy' of racism this position becomes problematic if one considers significant studies which have identified racism as existing in pre- capitalist structures (Robinson, 1983; Fryer, 1984).

John Gabriel and Gideon Ben-Tovim, (1986) in particular argue that the relative autonomy of Hall and CCCS still reduces 'race' to class. They argue that the only way to avoid the determinist trap is to see racism as having its own autonomous formation which is complex and contradictory. This means focusing on the concrete struggles against forms of racism in particular situations. They argue that it is possible to deconstruct forms of racism at local government level and dovetail anti-racist policies and struggles in

it place. Thus in their view, intervention by black and white groups committed to ant-racism at the local level, community organisations and political parties can effectively reduce racial inequalities. Gilroy (1982) criticises their approach as being 'ahistorical' and idealist and of putting to much faith in anti-racist practice,when their own evidence proves its limitations.

In research of this nature a personal understanding of racism is important in terms of experiential understanding of the subject. This experiential understanding is linked to issues of empathy and political interpretation and validation. Some black academics may have a greater chance of sharing the experiential and the political. In recognising the importance of experiential levels of understanding one cannot underestimate the academic and theoretical discussions of racism that have tried to create a framework that unravels its complex and contradictory contours. While I would agree that class and racial inequalities do impinge on each other in the context of British racism, I would argue that from a personal and political point of view racism is not only 'relatively autonomous', but overrides class inequalities in given situations. Hall (1980), suggests that **"..Race is thus, also, the modality in which class is 'lived', the medium, through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through" (Hall, 1980: 341).** While Hall's assertion is correct in the sense that 'race' can effect the way class struggle is experienced, one cannot deny the ideological power of racism as a non-economic factor that can operate independently of, and more powerful than social class. Thus within the context of this study I would contend that black

student experience is structured more through 'race' inequality than class inequality.

Such theoretical discussions of race and racism have been important in trying to create a framework that begins to unravel the consistencies and contradictions of ideology and practice. However, for the purpose of this study I am coming from a theoretical position that sees state policies as important conductors of racist processes and also sees racism as having a separate historical and cultural base. I would agree that British racism has an economic dimension, in that black labour is reproduced through the structures of an education system and the labour-market. However, this is played out against the powerful backdrop of cultural forms, in which 'racism' as a 'non-economic' factor has independent influence.

2.3 Qualitative Methods

The area of black students experiences in higher education is one which largely has been overlooked in educational and social research. Due to the limited research base, the method chosen had to be one of exploration rather than theory verification. Thus to begin to understand people's perceptions of reality, ultimately means adopting a sociological method that is sympathetic to the voice and language of that experience. For me this means trying to understand the dynamics of black student experience within a 'grounded' qualitative framework. This is the process by which theory is extracted from data and then illustrated with examples of that data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss's approach to theory generation places a heavy emphasis on the

openness of data. This means that new conceptualisations and categorisations from one's research can evolve continuously and with clarity which can be shared with the reader.

This general qualitative approach is suitable for my study because it recognises the intentions and motivations of social actors, and because it captures the complicated social interaction in the research field. A qualitative approach can provide information on the way in which actors create, interpret, and modify the world around them in terms of their subjective meanings. This point is highlighted by Maclean when he states that:

> **Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with meanings. The foundation of such research is understanding and interpretation. Through evidence obtained through interviewing or the spoken word or both, researchers attempt to understand the intentions and actions of people. Qualitative researchers believe that knowledge is socially constructed....They also recognise that meanings reflect multiple realities and that objective 'truths' do not exist. The unit of study is the whole person and his or her reaction to the phenomenon under study (Maclean, 1987: 132).**

Burgess (1985), identifies four key common features of interpretive research. First, the researcher tries not to disturb the natural setting. Second, the research design can be altered to allow for unexpected yet important findings to be incorporated as they turn up. Third, the focus is on social processes and the meanings given to them by participants. Fourth, data collection and analysis occur together.

It should be acknowledged that employing the ethnographic method means that research questions and categories are never

solidified, rather they are forever developing, and new issues may be raised daily within the field of research.[1] It is for these reasons that the research process is dynamic and on-going, which poses problems for the traditional sociological method. This means that it cannot be pre-organised in the same way as survey research. J. Wiseman succinctly describes the analytical process in the ethnographic approach:

> **This constant interplay of data gathering and analysis is at the heart of qualitative research. It is therefore difficult indeed to discuss coding, processing, analysis and writing without also discussing planning and data gathering, for in no other approach is the interrelatedness of all portions of the research act quite so obvious. For me, with the possible exception of the early planning stages, all aspects of the research act are going on almost simultaneously. Early fragments of analysis and of conceptual insights make their appearance both in the organization or coding of material and in the most current decisions I make about what field material to gather in the future (Wiseman, 1974: 33)**

By using qualitative methods one aims to treat those we interact with as thinking creative beings who are both complex and unpredictable. I will not want to construe the actions of those in my study as being solely a knee-jerk reaction to external stimuli, but rather I will want to use their grounded realities to help

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1. The ethnographic method of research was developed originally by anthropologists who wished to study a society or some aspect of a society, culture or group in depth. They developed an approach which depended heavily on observation and, in some cases, complete or partial integration into the society being studied. This form of participant observation enabled the researchers, as far as possible, to share the same experiences as the subjects and so to understand better why they acted the way they did. This approach is no longer limited to anthropological studies and has over the last thirty years been effectively used in studies of small groups (Willis, 1977: Burgess, 1984: Pollard, 1985: Holland and Eisenhart, 1990). Within the context of this study limited participant observation was used where possible to gain further insight into the students' lived experiences and institutional behaviour. The term ethnography is used to refer these circumstances.

illuminate both overt and covert institutional practices as experienced by the black students themselves. In his discussion on state policies and black people, John Solomos makes a point that is extremely relevant to my research, when he states that black people:

> **...are not simply the objects of state actions. They are also collective social actors, and their everyday actions often have the effect of questioning the legitimacy of the role of specific state agencies (Solomos, 1988: 186).**

While it is clear that an ethnographic framework can create a particular insight into the lived experience of people's reality, it has to be acknowledged that it cannot by itself provide the whole picture of a complicated and multi-layered reality. Rather it provides a context for understanding 'part' of what is going on. Shipman (1988) has outlined some of the limits of ethnographic research. He suggests that (a) the presence of the observer may change the behaviour of the group, (b) there can be no re-testing of results since the behaviour is not observed under controlled conditions, (c) the researcher can never be sure that the real motivations and interpretations have been uncovered to explain the behaviour.

In response to these criticisms it could be argued that firstly, the observer can check to see whether the behaviour of the group is affected by his or her presence during the pilot study by the use of indepth questioning. Secondly, because the observer has a grounded theory, there is no need to test or re-test one's theory since the data collected is true to that given situation. Also a continuous presence within the research field allows for checking

and testing and the reinterpretation of data. Thirdly, the ethnographer's central concern is to provide a description that is faithful to the world-view of the participants involved in the study. However, Abercrombie et al (1980) argue that in reality both empiricism and grounded theory are part of the same logic, because one cannot collect data without theory or develop theory without an empirical reference.

2.4 Methodological techniques used in the study

One way of ensuring validity within the research process is to utilise the practice of 'triangulation'. Shipman, (1988) describes it as the technical term for the use of two or more methods of collecting data. Within the field of my own research I used the principle of methodological triangulation to ensure that material collected from observation, interview and documentation was cross-referenced for validity (Denzin, 1978). This entailed sampling between qualitative methods, for example comparing documented minutes of meetings with perceptions of those meetings obtained from informal discussions. Methodological triangulation was also used to compare and contrast the data obtained from black student interviews and observational field notes.

Participant observation as a research tool, was very important to my study as it enabled me to develop a more intimate and informal relationship with those who I was observing. Similarly, Mac an Ghaill (1988) in his research on black student sub-cultures in schools argues that by using participant observation, while

examining the African-Caribbean student's response to the school, **"he came to see the internal logic and legitimacy of their 'sub-cultural resistance' to racism" (Mac an Ghaill, 1988: 6).**

Within my own research milieu I was able to observe black student interaction in a range of settings over a period of two years. I observed behaviour within the formal classroom environment and engaged in student to student discourses in the more informal arena of the student canteen where I interacted with and observed black student perceptions of the institution on a day to day basis. Observations were recorded in field notes, which were updated regularly. I was also able to observe student activity from the more formal position as a classroom lecturer, within the institution, and observe black student behaviours in feeder further educational establishments as a part-time tutor.

The research diary took the form of a folder in which at regular intervals I would restructure and reformulate new theoretical ideas brought about through my work in the field and the research process generally.

2.5 Interviews

Initially thirty-four black students were contacted formally by the use of a covering letter and a return slip, so that exact interview times could be arranged. In all my interviews I explained the nature of my research to the students partly for informative reasons and partly as a way of reassuring them about my intentions.

Semi-structured indepth taped interviews were conducted at regular intervals throughout the first two years of the research with the individual black students. These interviews took on average between half, and one and a half hours. Within the context of informal discussion groups, I interviewed at length three groups of final year students to probe their understanding of being in the institution for three years. These informal interviews took about three hours to complete. In both individual and group interviews, an interview schedule was used as a starting point for the discussion of themes that had evolved out of the pilot study.

Due to the different structure of the courses and the flexibility of the discussions, I found it was sometimes difficult to standardise such themes on each course as the interaction between researcher and respondent was never the same. The discussion points listed below emanate from course structure, student experience and the unpredictability of the research process: (a) Experience of Schooling, (b) Post-School Education and Work (c) Course Motivation, (d) Interview and Selection Procedures, (e) Student Perceptions of a black course, (f) Course ethos, (g) Views on subjects studied, (h) Specific views on multicultural/anti-racist course content, (i) Racist and Sexist incidents, (j) Relationships with Significant others, (j) Experience of teaching practice, (k) Experience on placement, (l) Financial problems, (m) Black role models, (n) Perceived occupational destinations, (0) Destinations, (p) Views about the interview.

2.6 Documentation

Throughout the period of the research field notes were taken at a wide range of institutional activities. These included various equal opportunity and enterprise steering committee meetings, where on some occasions I was specifically invited to share my views on the findings of my previous research. I felt it was important to understand the institutional construct and framing of equal opportunity and access policies at the decision-making level of the institution. I also participated in Black Country Access Federation (BCAF) meetings with other black tutors which gave me access to a wealth of information. I was able to participate in the short-listing and interviewing for a new Ethnic Minorities Liaison post, which gave me an important insight into the institutional structure of interview and selection processes. Other documentation generated by the research included official publications on equal opportunities such as government reports on access, books published by (SRHE), journals, newspapers and television. These were able to provide the context within which institutional policies were developed and professional concerns were shaped.

2.7 Institutional Context of the Research

Wolverhampton Polytechnic has four campuses situated in three major West-Midlands towns, two campuses are situated in Wolverhampton, one in Walsall and one in Dudley. In terms of the size of the local black population, Wolverhampton has 17.5% (44,291), Walsall has 8.6% (22,723) and Dudley has 4.1% (12,341) (Census, 91).

In 1986 Wolverhampton Polytechnic adopted an equal opportunities policy of which a central aim was to identify areas of indirect discrimination or unequal opportunities preventing the entry of ethnic minority students into the institution. In line with this commitment in 1986, the polytechnic validated Access Courses with 5 local colleges. This has now increased to 13 colleges in 1993. During 1987, the Black Country Access Federation (BCAF) was formed. Its role was to develop a framework for course development, with the view to provide accreditation across a range of courses and institutions. A key commitment by BCAF was to encourage the recruitment of black students.

In order to further the implementation of the equal opportunity policy, the Polytechnic established an Equal Opportunity Unit with a range of functions, including a brief to develop further research into the area of access. In 1987 funds were obtained for a research project entitled 'The Access Effect'. The central focus of the study was: "a comparative analysis of the effectiveness (in both objective and subjective terms) of different routes into HE for ethnic minority students, with a particular focus on the role of

Access Courses" (CNAA, 1989: 3). The study, based on a sample of 118 respondents, looked at the experiences of both black and white students and how they judged their 'success'.

The key findings from the research suggested that while non-targeted Access Courses did appear to offer limited opportunities for black students, their overall numbers were quite small and by no means dramatically increasing. Evidence from the study showed that within the black student population, African-Caribbean and British Black Students were more likely to be underrepresented on courses, less likely to have 'A' levels, more likely to be older than other groups, and more likely to be from working class origin.

In comparison, Asian student profiles resembled quite closely those of white students, apart from social class. Black students in the study commented on the lack of black staff and the eurocentric nature of the curriculum. The students cited 35 racist incidents as well as 40 sexist ones. The study concluded that: "A racist and sexist environment did exist and was commented upon but inspite of this the general response was favourable" (CNAA, 1989: 16).

During September-December 1987, a smaller study internally funded as an equal opportunities initiative was carried out in four schools in the Polytechnic, consisting of a sample of 40 black students. This study was aimed at uncovering the students subjective perceptions on their course of study. The study found that although 75% of the students had originally expressed high satisfaction with their course, the situation changed when they

were asked more specific questions about how courses could and should be improved. The study concluded that:

> **When students were faced with direct questions on race issues, they were more willing to make comments - both in support of what is being offered and in criticising course content. One could summarise by saying that although 52.5% of students saw their course content as good, this does not mean that they were satisfied with the way the 'race' element was treated....Another interesting point is the variability in students' perceptions of how 'race' was dealt with. For example, some students expressed higher expectations of their course and therefore made more demands on it. Others, even on the same course, did not see 'race' as a significant issue for their studies (Housee, Williams and Willis, 1990: 211).**

These two studies from the Equal Opportunities Unit preceded my study and pointed the way for a further detailed exploration of the complex interface between black students and white educational structures. Such research has also pointed to a need to use more indepth qualitative methods to uncover more about how black students conceptualise their higher educational experiences. It is precisely this knowledge gap that my own research is attempting to fill.

2.8 Black Participation Rate

It can be argued that the participation rate in higher education is determined by a number of factors, some related to individuals, and internal to the cultural group to which they belong, and others which relate to their position within the larger society and to the specific policies and procedures of institutions of higher education. In the case of black students, discrimination in admissions and assessment procedures and racial harassment inside institutions can limit their chances of benefiting from available opportunities. The general ethos and nature of the curriculum can deter some sections of the black community from entering higher education institutions.

If we consider the numerical importance of black students in the Polytechnic, it is the case that in 1987-8 African-Caribbean and Asian students made up 3.5% and 8.2% of the total student population. In 1990-1 they made up 4.0% and 9.6% respectively. The figures do indicate that there has been a slight rise in the recruitment of African-Caribbean and Asian students, and recent figures from 1992 indicate a total black participation rate of 15%.

The mission statement of the polytechnic specifically states a commitment to access, accessibility and equal opportunities. As part of this commitment the Higher Education Shop was opened in Wolverhampton town centre in 1988. The HE Shop provides academic and career counselling for drop-in clients who make up about 80% of those people who literally walk in off the street.

Analysis from shop records indicated that 15% of their clients were black and 52% were women.

2.9 National Data

It is fair to say that the information pertaining to the progress of black students into higher education is scant and patchy, and based largely upon case study material obtained from a limited number of institutions or individuals (Singh, 1990). The origins of governmental interests in the numbers of black students in higher education were brought into focus by the Rampton Report (1981) which recommended that the DES should arrange for the collection of details from all universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education of the ethnic breakdown of their student populations. During 1990 PCAS and UCCA began monitoring the ethnic background of applicants to their institutions. Data emerging from this monitoring suggested that black students made up 1% of the university population in comparison to 4% for the polytechnics.

Skellington et al (1992) commenting on the monitoring data, pointed out that universities admitted lower proportions of all black groups compared to proportions of applicants, but slightly higher proportions of white students than applications received. For example, 8.7% of applications came from black groups, but only 6.4 per cent of accepted students came from black groups. White applicants had the highest acceptance rate, 53% while the rate for black applicants was much lower, between 27-29%.

Bird et al (1992) have argued that 'ethnic minority' students form a higher proportion of higher educational institution places than their proportions in the population as a whole, around 14.% compared to 5.5%. However he points out that the data is open to various interpretations, for example it could be that positive action practices have been successful in recruiting more black students, or that some higher educational institutions have greater proportions of such students than others, so that the average should not induce complacency.

Indeed the figures should be treated with caution as they as yet do not provide a sound basis for a more longitudinal analysis. It can also be argued that the collection of this data in itself does not constitute ethnic monitoring. For 'effective' monitoring such resulting data needs to be analysed to reveal any unexplained discrepancies and appropriate policies developed to prevent any future inequalities occuring (Taylor, 1992). Also such figures only deal with entry, and tell us nothing about rates of progression and destination. Skellington et al correctly reminds us that the issue is not simply one of numerical proportionality. As they state:

> **Great care must be taken with these preliminary results of monitoring. First certain differences may be obscured. For example, black women may do better than black men; Afro-Caribbean and Asian applicants may fare differently; the locality, recruitment policies and course provision of different institutions can influence the extent of minority ethnic group demand. Polytechnics may be recruiting from catchment areas that have far higher proportions of minority ethnic groups than the 5 per cent national average....Secondly, the figures quoted often do not take into account the form of some of the findings. The minority ethnic group population in Britain is younger than the white group and comparisons with the total population**

> **figure can produce potentially misleading results. Thirdly,the quality of service is not analysed. Such data tell us little of the black experience of higher education (Skellington et al, 1992:129).**

In a study of access for black students into higher education, the methodological questions are multifaceted. There is an issue concerning the researcher himself and his cultural and political history and understanding; there is a necessary and difficult unpacking of the reality of racism and the theoretical framework within which this is interpreted; there is the nature of qualitative methods used over a three year period requiring continuous rethinking and refining; there is the institutional context of the study in terms of an understanding of the professional and bureaucratic involvement by 'access' providers; there is the setting within which black students are received into and perceived by the institution and indeed the perceptions of the students themselves; and finally there is the national concern with numbers, with monitoring and with a specific focus on 'wider access' which provides the framework which constrains and guides institutional bureaucracies and policy makers. These important themes will be taken up in much more detail in later chapters.

The first two chapters of this study represent an attempt to stake out some of the important issues involved in trying to analyse educational access for black students. First there are the discourses of access, and their ideological implications; second there are the theoretical models of access that influence institutional policy; third there is the role of the researcher and his methodological tools of investigation. Taken together, these

two chapters form Part One of the study; analysing access. Part One has posed important questions about how black access issues are constructed through educational literature on access by examining the assumptions that underlie national debates and official policy responses on wider access. Part Two poses questions that are interrelated with part one, yet have a different focus i.e. the actual interface between specific institutional provision and the black student experience. How is institutional life made sense of, in terms of the meanings and values that black students bring with them? What strategies do black students develop in response to an understanding of their structural position within a specific educational institution? And finally what meanings do particular course philosophies have for black student groupings?. Part Two is an attempt to answer these questions.

PART TWO: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER 3. HNC BLACK CONSTRUCTION WORKERS COURSE

The aim of the next three chapters in the study is to locate the lived experiences of black students studying on three different higher educational courses at one institution. It represents a semi-ethnographic account of my interaction with a sample of students passing through a specific higher educational structure. This chapter deals with the perceptions of students on a black construction course.

Background to the HNC Course

To understand the location of the black construction course within the institution it is important to unravel its interesting historical origins within the government's Training Agency in a paper sent to the polytechnic entitled Special Groups- New Courses Programme (1989). The training agency stated that:

> This paper sets out to cover the main issues and areas of likely concern to institutions wishing to participate in the Training Agency's planned programme of positive action in support of Women, Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and People with Disabilities..As the National Training Agency we are concerned with skill supply problems. Demand for highly qualified people (HQP) will continue to grow whilst supply of new HQP may be demographically constrained....our overall strategy is a commitment to the appropriate development and training of women, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities, heron referred to as special groups' (Training Agency, 1989: 2).

The assumption behind the Training Agency's thinking is that those 'special groups' need their low level skills upgrading so they can become more attractive to industry at the higher qualification levels. Within this framework discrimination within the market place is not seen as a major barrier, rather

inappropriate or low level skills are seen as the central barrier to education and training. This philosophy was further embellished by the Government's 1989 Employment Act which brought in an amendment to section 37 of the 1976 Race Relations Act. The changes meant that from the sixteenth of January 1990 any person or employer could offer 'special' training to members of an underrepresented group within the labour-force. This provision had only been open to designated training bodies. It was argued that such changes would give employers greater scope to take positive action.

The ideological manipulation of 'positive action' as 'special needs' as construed by government and related bodies has been commented upon by Peter Wilson who makes the point that:

> The attempt to absorb the concept of equal opportunity within a classic tory notion of meritocracy...has given rise to the perverse commitment to 'positive action' by this government...specifically funding programmes for women, black people and those with disabilities (Wilson, 1987: 5).

The Training Agency which has now been absorbed into the Employment Department has over the past few years increasingly become important in directing and controlling the kind of specialised training provision offered to institutions and organisations. Under the umbrella of positive action a Special One Year HNC in Building Studies for Ethnic Minorities was funded by the Training Agency to run at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in the school of Construction, Engineering and Technology. The course started in June 1990 and it was proposed to terminate it in June 1991.

It was explained in the student's course guide why the course was necessary:

> **Employers are finding increasing difficulty in recruiting new trainees with certain special skills. With the knowledge that potential future employee numbers are reducing due to demographic trends, there is a great urgency to encourage previously unrepresented groups to look at construction as a career choice (HNC Course Guide, 1990: 1).**

The course guide went on to list the 'excellent prospects in the construction industry', such as Architectural Technician, and Quantity Surveyor. From data obtained from the 'ethnic monitoring' survey of 1987, it was found that the school of construction had a relatively healthy black intake of 12% on its full-time HND in Building Studies. This was in relation to local black population of between 13-14%. However, if one looked at the part-time HNC in Building Studies, which tended to recruit students who were sent by their employers, the intake locally of black students was only 2%.

Due to the Training Agency's concern with the retraining of the unemployed, an important requirement of the black construction course was that the 20 places available had to go to black unemployed people. Due the involvement of the Training Agency the course was treated as an Employment Training equivalent. Thus those who were accepted on the course could get an extra £10-12 per week plus various social security benefits. The course was advertised nationally and locally through the 'quality' press and specific African-Caribbean and Asian newspapers. After the press release had gone out, an open day was organised on the 6th

of March, 1990, so intending applicants could find out more about the course.

The course stipulated that no formal educational qualifications were required, but applicants would have to demonstrate enthusiasm for training, basic numeracy and literacy skills and devote the necessary time in order to complete the course successfully. Thus the central criterion was the 'ability to benefit'. The black construction course's stated objective was to 'place every trainee into a job', and part of this aim was to provide each student a work placement of about 12 weeks, overseen by a placement officer. Black students accepted on the course would be required to sit formal examinations at the end of each training period.

Out of the 20 students on the course 9 were Afro-Caribbean and 11 were Asian, and three were female. The age range of the students went from 18 to 37. Over half of the students had heard about the course through the black press, the rest through leaflets, a city council, a lecturer, a relative, a college and a local newspaper. Through the help of one of the course coordinators, I was able to contact the group of students prior to interviewing them so I could explain who I was and what I was doing. Due to the fact that the course was on the eve of breaking up for Christmas, which affected the availability of some of the students I was only able to interview the 8 students who turned up on the scheduled day. Four of the students were African-Caribbean and four were Asian. The in depth interviews with each student lasted

between half and one and a half hours. The schedule was broken down into 10 themes.

The black construction course was of interest to me because it was unique to the institution and also because it had a clear vocational element. At a more interactional level, I wanted to ascertain how these black students made sense of their experiences on a black only course. I also wanted to probe their personal constructs to see how they perceived the ethos of the institution, and how they dealt with issues of race and racism. What follows is an account of the life histories and experiences of Balbir (33), Desmond (41), Basil (44), Joseph (27), Julie (22), Harvinder (38), Manjit (30), and Baljit (37) on a specific black construction course.

Key to transcripts

[ ]	Background information
.....	Pause
(.....)	Material edited out
*	From fieldnotes

Experiences of Schooling/Employment

It was important for me to ascertain exactly how these black construction students had understood their past experiences of schooling and the labour-market.

P.A: How would you describe your schooling and entry into the job market ?

Balbir: It was very good. My brothers and sisters all went to the same Grammar School. It was the best days of my life. I never missed a day, the general atmosphere was good. I enjoyed being in the top stream.

The only other positive response came from Julie who felt her schooling had been "just ok". However, the other six students all reported some negative feelings.

Joseph: I had a fight at school and got sent to a special school from the age of nine. I found the work too easy so I refused to work. I left school with the reading ability of a ten year old. I had no exams except in Cooking and Carpentry. When I was fourteen I was kicked out of home and got a flat at sixteen. At college I got a City & Guilds in Carpentry & Joinery and Maths and English "0" level. I saw that as an achievement.

In the case of Desmond his negative recollections seemed to emanate more from feelings of a lost opportunity.

Desmond: When you are young you don't realise how important school is. I only did two years schooling in this country. I left with nothing. I started work as an Apprentice Mechanic. I did a course at the Skill Centre, then went back into the trade.

Like Desmond, Harvinder suffered the trauma of having his education disrupted through immigration, but although feeling isolated, was able to get something out of the system.

Harvinder: I came to England when I was twelve. In 1964 there were not many black people. There was a lack of understanding. I moved to CSE groups, I got four grade ones. I went to sixth-form college to do "A" levels, but after six months I had problems with my parents and I left.

For Basil, Manjit and Baljit, they could only recall totally negative experiences of schooling.

Basil: I learnt nothing at school, nothing at all.

Manjit: School was boring, I wasn't motivated.

Baljit: I wasn't very good at school, I left when I was fifteen. I had no qualifications, so I went into the Army for three years.

I then went on to ask the students a more specific question about their respective occupational experiences in the last two years.

Balbir: I worked full-time in construction for two years. But the mistake I made was to flop my Electronic Exams in eighty-nine, and I didn't get promoted.

Unlike Balbir, Desmond did not have the same kind of employment based construction background.

> ***Desmond:*** *The last two years I have been unemployed. I used to work for myself as a mechanic, but I felt I was not going anywhere. I just felt demoralised. I did look for other work but the wages were not much kop. I built a garage at my house, I made it out of breeze block. I started a brick laying course at Bilston College. I heard about the construction course at Bilston. I was turned down at first, but was offered a place later.*

It was interesting to find out that both Desmond and Baljit had similar training and interest trajectories before they had joined the course.

> ***Baljit:*** *I worked in London at Marks & Spencers, stock-taking. I have also been on courses. I have got a City & Guilds in brick laying from Bilston College, I also put an extension on my house.*

Balbir, Desmond and Manjit, to a lesser or greater extent all had some kind of formal or informal interest and experience in the area of construction, whereas Joseph, Julie and Harvinder did not. Basil and Manjit did not respond to this question.

Joseph: I worked for myself for a while, then I worked for the Probation Service for two years while attending day release.

Julie: I worked in the library in Derbyshire for six months,and I have worked as a cashier in Sainsbury's for one and a half years.

Harvinder: I was unemployed and jobs were hard to come by due to the depressed area of Sheffield.

Specific Course Motivation

It was important to locate the kinds of motivation that had propelled these black students on to the course.

P.A: Why did you decide to do this course ?

Balbir: If I didn't get on this course I would have tried another course. It was the HND Building Supervisor who helped me choose this course. At first I felt it was the last course I would go on, but it has tuned out OK.

It seemed clear that in Balbir's case the course was an opportunity that just happened to fit in with his long term plans and if it had not worked out, he was already committed to some form of further study. This commitment may well have stemmed from the fact that he had been denied promotion. It was also evident from the interview with Balbir that he had been initially suspicious of the course because it was aimed specifically at black people. This

point shall be discussed further in the section on 'student perceptions of a black only course'.

Desmond's reason for wanting to do the course were firmly rooted in his experience of being unemployed. He saw the course as a route back into employment.

Desmond: ***I would like a job at this moment if possible.***

Both Basil and Julie felt that they were at a crossroads in their lives. Basil wanted a change in the direction of his career and Julie felt she lacked direction.

Basil: ***I was fed up with what I was doing.***

Julie: ***I couldn't decide what I wanted to do, but I didn't know***
what I was letting myself in for.

It became evident from interviewing both Joseph and Harvinder that they had known each other prior to the course and that both of them were being sponsored by Sheffield City Council, who were working in conjunction with a housing association to train two black workers in construction to assist the respective Asian and African-Caribbean communities in housing projects. However, for Joseph the fact he was black had an important significance.

Joseph: ***I thought I had the ability to do the course. There is a lack of black people in the industry. You may have one or two foremen or labourers, but the problem is we lack qualifications.***

Harvinder's motivation seemed more related to the aims of the organisation that was sponsoring him.

Harvinder: "I was sponsored by Sheffield Council so I could help the housing association on the construction side".

Both Manjit and Baljit had experienced rejection in the labour-market and both saw the course as a light at the end of the tunnel.

Manjit: I had spent five years in a deprived area, I had applied for housing courses without success.

Baljit: After the City & Guilds I visited builders but nobody wanted me. I felt I needed to study higher. I was going to apply for Advanced Craft but now I am interested in Quantity Surveying. The construction course is a very good course. I see it as a great opportunity to do it, I may do a degree.

Interview & Selection Procedures

Basil didn't answer this question and Balbir was not formally interviewed as he already worked for the institution.

P.A. How did you feel when you where interviewed ?

Desmond: There were two black people, it was ok, I felt good about being interviewed by my own people.

Julie: It would have been better if I'd been interviewed by an afro-caribbean person.

Harvinder: Yes they were fair, they asked me about my reasons for doing the course.....two black people interviewed me, it made me feel comfortable. I felt they would select suitable applicants and would less likely to be prejudiced. I felt I'd been assessed fairly.

Joseph: I was interviewed by a black woman and a black man. I felt more comfortable, it was easy for me to relate to them, like you.....but I got the impression that they were scraping the barrel to get black people on the course. I had to give up allot but I felt it was worth it for the long term benefits.

Manjit: Mr Sagoo interviewed me. It was quite comfortable and friendly.

Baljit: It was alright, I was just so happy to be taken on by an asian lecturer and a white lady. Being similar I thought I would have a chance. I felt the course would be very difficult to get on to, but now I think it will help allot.

The comments of Desmond, Harvinder, Joseph, Manjit and Baljit indicated that they had been treated fairly during their interviews.It was also clear that the reason for the high level of satisfaction that the students identified, was partly due to the fact

that they were made to feel more comfortable by the presence of black people on the interviewing panel.

Student Perception of a Black Course

How did these black construction students rationalise and make sense of being on such a 'special course?'

P. A. : How do you feel about being on a black only course?

Balbir: Personally its great,there is comradeship,enthusiasm and unity. But I also think that such a course is insulting. As it suggests that black people cannot get into polytechnic normally. Lecturers in other departments think this course is useless, but its turned out to be good. I would support the course, its been devised well.

Balbir's comments focus our attention to the contradictory elements endemic in such provision, in that such provision appears to accept that black people, due to structural racial discrimination, will require the assistance of certain educational or training programmes to bring about 'equal outcomes'. But at the same time, such provision carries with it a special needs,and tokenistic ethos, which suggests subtly that there is something dysfunctionally wrong with such black communities that require such provision.

On another level, a dichotomy exists between the interpersonal perception of what is being experienced, and the 'objective' symbolic messages that emanate from specific course provision.

However, it is true that not all the construction students will perceive and indeed experience the apparent contradictory processes that are continually at play. Out of the eight black students interviewed, only Balbir and Joseph were able to identify these contradictory processes, and in their different ways accommodate them.

> ***Joseph:*** *Why is this called a 'special course', its like 'special schools' for the dunces. Its like we are problem cases. Its saying we are not capable of going into the run of things. The cause behind it may be good and it had got good points but its like you are an invalid or you have got something wrong with you. We are being categorised and I don't like it.*

It is clear that Joseph makes his assessment of the course from the position of somebody who had experienced 'special provision' in his schooling and that his critical insight is thoroughly grounded in a language of experience. However, for Desmond, Basil, Julie, Harvinder, Manjit and Baljit the issue was quite straight forward, a black only corse was a good thing.

> ***Desmond:*** *Its alright, I don't mind causes that try to help black people. There aren't many black people on the management side.*

> ***Basil:*** *Its a good idea, if wasn't just for us, we wouldn't be on it.*

Julie: I think its a good thing, its just nice to be at poly. I don't think black people get a fair chance. On this course they cannot discriminate on colour if you have ability.

Harvinder: Everyone is helpful to each other. I never really questioned the fact it was black only. I think there is a need for it. Our people are being deprived, we need to encourage them.

Manjit: It doesn't really bother me, Its a good opportunity for black people.

Baljit: Damn good course. There is still allot of prejudice in this country. Although I do feel it should be a mixed group [.....] We used to sit in with the degree students on Thursdays,there was only one black person on the degree. Both groups sat separately, I wondered why they were not mixing with us.

Julie appeared to think that because black students were on the course, issues of racial discrimination were rendered inconsequential, and that the objective criteria of 'ability' would be the important yardstick. There arises another issue, to what extent is the construction course really a black course?. In the sense of a course of study organised by black people for other black people, it is not. Rather it is a course organised by a white institution for black people. Baljit's comments raised issues about the ethics of having black only courses, and also touched upon the point made by Balbir earlier, about the status of such a course

within the institution, as perceived by some staff and students. What is the framework that guides the students experience of the black construction course? What are the factors that influence group and course identity?. These central questions will be discussed more fully in the chapter on Black Consciousness.

Course Ethos

At course level I wanted to find out how these black students perceived the ethos of the course. Some of the students linked course environment to their relationships with other black students on the course.

P.A: How would you describe the course environment?

Balbir: Construction students are not academically qualified. They are more down to earth. You can have a good laugh and drink with them.

For Balbir, course ethos related to the extent to which the students got on socially, but for Desmond and Harvinder the ethos was grounded in the academic requirements of the course.

Desmond: The course is ok, but its a bit of pressure sometimes,its hard work. If I want to pass this course I can't sit down.

Harvinder: The course is demanding, lecturers rush through it. Sometimes there are no hand-outs, just fast dictation. I tend to miss what's being said.

Joseph, Manjit and Baljit all described the course ethos as good in their own ways.

Joseph: *Yeah, I get on with everybody.*

Manjit: *A good atmosphere.*

Baljit: *Yes the group is very good. They come from all walks of life.*

However, for Basil and Julie the kind of ethos reported by the other students did not approximate to their own perceptions. Basil felt the ethos was fragmented due to ethnic rivalries between african-caribbean and asian students. Julie did not believe a course ethos existed at all.

Basil: *There is some niggling between afro-caribbean and asian students. Some asians have stereotypes of afro-caribbeans, they feel we are not up to it.*

Julie: *The numbers on the course has dwindled. I am a loner, I do my own thing. I don't see any ethos.*

It was interesting how Baljit's and Basil's concept of course ethos contradicted each other. However, it was not possible to elicit the extent of ethnic tension as this issue was not raised by any other students in the study.

Racist/Sexist Incidents on Course

P.A: Have you experienced or witnessed any racist or sexist behaviour while on your course?

Balbir: No not really, I don't think anybody has.

Desmond: No.

Basil: No I have not.

Harvinder: No I can't say I have.

Joseph and Baljit felt they had encountered racist incidents on the course, while Julie felt that she had encountered both racism and sexism on her work placement.

Joseph: Racism comes in many forms. People are two faced, they pretend to respect you but resent you behind your back.

Baljit: Yes, the Head of Resources, all the time he asks you, 'are you construction?'. He should know, he is a right pain in the neck. He turned off the printer at the mains when I was using it. He has got an attitude problem.

Julie: I worked for the council in the Civic Centre, the guys I worked with were plain rude, just because I was a black female. If I asked a question they would say 'this

girl is sick'. I was seen as an ornament and ended up playing receptionist.

Julie's experience highlights the way in which ethnic and gendered experiences are lived through by black women simultaneously. As far as Julie was concerned her race and gender were perceived as being at odds with the masculine ethos of construction. The experience of Julie raises questions about the complex way racist and sexual oppressions interact in particular contexts. Research carried out by Edwards (1990) on the experiences of mature mother-students in higher education highlighted the relative autonomy of 'race' in shaping some female students institutional location, as she stated:

> **....In addition to feeling that they should not be there as mothers there was also the sense that they were under scrutiny as blacks.... Although the ethnic minority women's experience of mothering and others' valuation of it was significant to them, within the educational institution it was their race, and issues surrounding racism, that often became central. This was particularly so for the Afro-Caribbean women, but also for others (Edwards, 1990: 195).**

Student Relationships with Significant Others

PA: Do you get on with your lecturers? and fellow students?

Balbir: "I get on with some of the lecturers. We don't generally mix with other students. I don't have any links with the students union, its a waste of time.

Desmond: I am not an easy person to upset. I get on alright with my fellow students, like a house on fire. I don't really know other students.

Basil: With lecturers, good generally, with fellow students it depends. I don't mix with others.

Joseph: A good relationship with the lecturers because I speak my mind. I get on with other course members but I don't have much contact with anyone else.

Julie: I don't see the lecturers unless I have to. The relationship is purely academic. I don't feel comfortable with some of the students. I did join the union two weeks ago but that's all. I have black friends in Derby.

Harvinder: I found the lecturers to be very helpful. Yes, one or two students keep to themselves but the rest are sociable. No, there is too much work for me to mix with other students.

Manjit: Good understanding with staff. The people on the course are ok. I don't mix with others very much.

Baljit: I feel I can discuss problems with the lecturers. People on this course are mature, they are not young kids. They have lots of experience which creates an adult atmosphere..... Other students don't want to mix with us because we are all black. Other than our own group, nobody wants to talk to us.

It was clear that nearly all the black students reported having good relationships with their lecturers, particularly Baljit who felt he could share any problems with academic staff. Julie's response suggests that she saw her lecturers in a very instrumental light, only there to teach. It was apparent that none of the black students in the study mixed generally with other construction students. The comments of Balbir, Desmond, Basil, Harvinder, Manjit and Baljit suggested that they found enough friendship and support from those around them. Baljit's comments embellished the point that he had made earlier about the way other students perceived those on the black construction course.

All of the students except two felt they got on well with their fellow students. Harvinder detected some disunity with a few of the black students but felt overall that the relationships were integrated. However, Julie appeared to find it impossible to integrate fully with her fellow students on the course but had people in her home town who she looked to for support.

Academic or Personal Problems

Only two of the students admitted to having academic or personal problems. In the case of Julie, she felt independent enough to deal with any issues herself and would only seek assistance as a last resort. Manjit, however, felt that staff had supported him through difficult periods.

Financial Considerations.

P.A.: Are you satisfied with the financial arrangements on the course?

Balbir: I think its more than adequate, plus the travelling expenses they get.

Desmond: I get £74 a week but it doesn't really cover the mortgage. I would need at least £100 a week to make ends meet.

Basil: For me its a strain, I sold my car to come on this course.

Joseph: It's 'bull shit', I've got four kids and the money is not enough. I gave up allot to do this course. I just hope it is worth it in the long run.

Julie: Are you serious ?. All I was given on this course was a file, two pencils, a ruler,rubber and file paper. I get £47 a week, they pay £4 towards travel expenses and you

pay the rest. At first it didn't seem to bad but its not enough.

Harvinder: Not really, I need more than an extra £10 a week, it barely covers food.

Manjit: I'm not happy with it because I'm a family man.

Baljit: Its not enough, I can't claim for travel but I still have to pay for dinners.

Only Balbir felt that the financial arrangements were fair. But he was speaking from the position of somebody who receives a wage. Desmond, Joseph and Manjit's comments reflected the view that as adults with domestic responsibilities the financial incentives fell well short of what they considered to be acceptable. Basil's comments illustrated the kinds of material sacrifices that have to be made in order for a person to try and advance themselves.

While the educational and occupational value of the course cannot be denied, the dubious financial linkage with a form of Employment Training is problematic. The kinds of criticisms levelled at ET programmes generally, the coercion of the unemployed to take any form of training or employment in order to qualify for benefit, cannot be shirked by the construction course. With the construction course there is an element of choice, but the reality is that their choices are indeed limited to staying on the dole and be at the mercy of government training

schemes, whose aim is to 're-skill' or 're-train' you back into 'meaningful work'.

Curriculum Content

P.A.: What do you think about the subjects being taught on your course?

Balbir: Sometimes they are interesting, sometimes they are not. There are no subjects I dislike.

Desmond: They are all ok except for Environmental Science. I don't understand it.

Basil: I don't understand the BTEC and HNC subjects.

Joseph: They are just OK.

Julie: They are a bit hard, I don't think in practical terms. I like theory. This course involves allot of problem solving and lots of research. Its like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

Harvinder: I suppose they are alright.

Manjit: OK generally.

Baljit: All except Environmental Science, its not taught properly.

From the responses it was evident that Balbir, Joseph, Harvinder, and Manjit appeared to be relatively satisfied with the subjects they were being taught. Desmond, Baljit and Basil reported difficulties with particular subjects. Julie appeared to find problems dealing with the more practical elements of the course.

Pace of The Course

There seemed to be competing views on the level and pace of the course. Balbir, while agreeing it was high, still felt that most people could keep up. Desmond and Julie felt that they could just about cope with it the way it was. Baljit felt the pace was just right. Basil and Joseph found the course at times too slow and basic. Manjit and Harvinder felt the level was over pitched.

Experiences in the Employment Setting

P.A. : How would you describe your placements?

Desmond: I worked in Hospital Maintenance. I didn't achieve anything. It was just where they sent me. I got on with the other workers but it was just the job itself. I'd rather be on the construction side where there is action.

Basil: It was great I worked for Nottingham Council in the Technical Services Department and the Architects Department. I spent time in different departments.

Joseph: It was ok, I worked for Sheffield City Council in the Surveying and Building Maintenance Sections. We only dealt with existing buildings.

Julie: I didn't like the people I worked with and they didn't like me either.

Harvinder: I worked for Sheffield Works Department assisting an estimator on small repairs. I found the work enjoyable and the people helpful.

Manjit: I worked for the Estate Department in the poly, I was concerned with rooms and doors. It was very enjoyable.

Baljit: I worked for Faircloughs in Wednesfield helping the Quantity Surveyor. I really enjoyed it. Going into industry was very revealing.

Basil, Joseph, Harvinder, Manjit and Baljit all reported very positive experiences in their work placements. Desmond's placement appeared not to suit his interests. We had seen earlier the problems encountered by Julie in her placement and her comments reflected that negative experience.

Perceived Occupational Destination

P.A.: What will you do after the course?

Balbir: I will apply for a degree regardless of the outcome of the HNC.

Desmond: I hope to get a job with the council as a Building Inspector.

Basil: Get a job and get day release to do a degree.

Joseph: I will look for a construction job with a local firm perhaps.

Julie: I don't really want to work in construction. I will go and do something else.

Harvinder: If I am not sponsored I may not get a job.

Manjit: I will try to get a job in housing with the council and do day release for a degree.

Baljit: If I can't do a degree then I will look for work but there is a recession in the construction industry.

It was interesting to note that Balbir, Basil, Manjit and Baljit all wished to combine their future occupations with further higher educational credentials, for them it was a logical progression as it was for Baljit who saw his future career development also linked to the wider problems of the construction industry. Joseph laid more emphasis on gaining specific employment from the council and local firms. Julie and Harvinder were not sure about their futures after the course.

Seven months after leaving the course I contacted the students again to find out what they were doing. Balbir continued to work at the polytechnic as a technician and had passed his HNC and was going to study the degree in Building Studies on a part-time basis. Desmond completed the course and was going to study the BSC in Building management at the polytechnic. Desmond had applied for nine jobs, and got two interviews, but had been unsuccessful. Basil did not complete all the HNC, but had got a place at Thames Polytechnic to study a B.A. in Management Design and Building Studies. Basil had applied for 12 jobs and got two interviews but was unsuccessful.

Joseph passed the course, and was trying to get on to a Building Surveyors course at Huddersfield Polytechnic. Joseph had applied for eight jobs and had received two interviews but was unsuccessful. Julie did not complete the course because of personal reasons and was not contactable. Harvinder did not complete the course, and was not contactable either. Manjit passed the course and got a job straight away working as a Community Liaison Officer. Baljit completed the course and was going on to study the BSC in Building Management at the polytechnic.

Five of the eight students had continued with degree studies, and excluding Balbir, only Manjit had actually got a job. These construction students were always going to find it hard to gain employment at a time of crippling job losses in the construction industry in general. However, it was also clear from my follow up telephone interviews with the students that their optimistic outlook had changed and that further study had increasingly

failed to be an option rather it had, for many become compulsory. This left many of the students with mixed emotions. For they felt they had benefited from the course in terms of knowledge and self-development, but in terms of accessing jobs they were frustrated, as Joseph poignantly stated: ***"We are now qualified for non-existent jobs!"***

Chapter Three has considered the views, perceptions and expectations of students studying on a black construction course. Do any simiarities or differences exist for black students studying on B.Ed Teacher Training course at the same institution?. This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4. BEd TEACHING DEGREE COURSE.

Background to BEd Course.

During the 1970s and 1980s a series of studies examined the chronic shortages of black teachers in the education system. (Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, 1977b; Carr-Hill and Chanda-Boreham in Bhat et al., 1988, CRE, 1988). The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration was important because it recommended to the DES that exceptional steps needed to be taken to increase the number of black teachers. The DES then responded by circulating a letter in August 1978 to seven local education authorities inviting them to set up pilot courses with the aim of encouraging more black people to enter the teaching profession.

These 'Access Courses' consisted of a one year preparatory course leading to a 4 year BEd degree (East and Pitt, 1987). In 1980 the Caribbean Teachers Association suggested that only 0.15% of teachers were of Caribbean origin. During 1985 The Newham Asian Teachers' Association found that only 102 out of the borough's teacher force of 1,850 were asian. During the same year the Swann Report commented further on the chronic underemployment of black teachers. The CRE in 1988 found that African-Caribbean and Asian students constituted only 2.6% of all students on teacher training courses.

During the late 1980s some higher education institutions responded to this gross underrepresentation by receiving black only 'Access to Teaching' courses and general Access to Teaching courses. The students entering Teacher Training courses via this route were seen by the educational hierarchy as potential 'role models' as the Swann Report (1985) stated:

> **Ethnic minority teachers may be 'role models' in all-white schools as as well as in multi-racial schools, in the sense in which their presence may serve to counter and overcome any negative stereotypes in the minds of pupils, parents or teachers from the majority community about ethnic minorities and their place in our society (Swann Report, 1985: 9).**

Although the Swann Report acknowledged the effect of racism on the careers of black teachers its main recommendation was to encourage local education authorities to develop clearer equal opportunities policies. However, the gap between recommendations and action, and between policy and practice in the recruitment of black teachers, remains extensive.

Within the context of the Polytechnic I wanted to find out what kinds of perceptions and experiences such 'black role models' were having on initial teacher education courses. The Polytechnic has been receiving validated Access to Teaching Courses from local further educational colleges since 1989 and has increased its percentage of black students to 8% on the BEd in 1990-91. The BEd course at the polytechnic is professionally focussed and involves a variety of forms of practical teaching experience. Students are able to select a main subject from Art & Design, English, Geography, Mathematics, Science, Music, Religious Studies,

and Physical Education. The students would pursue these studies for half of the course time and later could choose to specialise in either Infant or Junior age-ranges.

The black BEd students were located partly through the help of a course coordinator and through my direct discussions with students on campus. Seven black female students studying on the BEd Primary course were interviewed individually between half and one and a half hours in an empty classroom. This group of students were particularly interesting due to the fact that they were all female. One level this perhaps reflected the nature of the course, but on another level it highlighted the intersection of 'race' and gender as important characteristics. What follows is an account of the interviews with Bertha (32), Carol (28), Emelda (34), Joyce (33), Brenda (26), Judy (25), Pamela (27).

Experiences of Schooling

It was important to establish from these group of black BEd students how they had perceived their schooling.

P.A: How would you describe your schooling?

Bertha: I enjoyed it really, it was a white dominated school so I was brought up in a white environment. I never really had any racial sort of problems. The way the teachers taught me was just fine.

Carol: I think it was alienating in a sense, because it was a largely white school and the teachers were all white.

There were some incidents where it was brought home to you that you were black, such as wearing school uniform, or tights in particular. I wore black tights and that was an issue with the headmistress. I couldn't wear black tights, so I said if I am black then why can't I wear black tights ?. Well she threatened to put me on report. I saw white girls wearing black tights you see so I couldn't understand why I couldn't wear black tights.

Brenda: Because I was one of the more cooperative students,I got support from staff and was encouraged. There were incidents of racism from a Careers Teacher and a new teacher at my school. The Careers teacher did not know about my performance and discouraged me from pursuing a career I was interested in, which was teaching. The other teacher used to make jibes about my colour.

Joyce: "It was a middle of the road school secondary school. I had positive encouragement from my teachers.

Judy: Yeah I enjoyed most of it, It wasn't too bad although there weren't many black pupils.

Emelda: I didn't have a difficult time as such because, I'm not showing off or anything, but I was sort of grade A right, so obviously you were looked on a bit differently to the others. The teachers were not as supportive as they should have been I don't think. Especially when it came to

actually getting a job. I think they tended to think you were going into nursing rather than anything else.

Pamela: I can't say that I really enjoyed school. The teachers didn't really motivate me. I can only remember one Asian teacher that used to encourage me.

Both Carol and Brenda reported racist incidents in their schooling, however, Joyce Emelda and Pamela felt that they were not given enough encouragement. Bertha, Joyce and Emelda reported positive experiences of their schooling. It was found that only 3 out the 7 students remembered having any black teachers in school or college.

Post School Education & Work

P.A: What did you do after you left school?

Bertha: Well I stayed on at sixth-form but I only got two A levels and I went to college for a year. That was local and that was a good year as well.

PA: Were there any black teachers in your school or college?
Bertha: No, none at all.

Carol: I went to work in an office as Clerical Assistant, then moved on and took up another job as a Clerk-Typist and Telephonist.

Brenda: I went to college to do 'A' levels because the school I went to did not offer the 'A' levels I wanted to study.

P.A: Were there any black teachers in your school or college?
Brenda: There were two black teachers in my school, one was Head of Year the other was a Biology Teacher.....I looked up to them as role models.

Joyce: I went to college. Dudley college for about three months. I didn't like it so I dropped out. It was just totally different to school. I could not reorganise myself so I dropped out and got a job, got married, got divorced and decided to come back to college. And here I am. No I had no black teachers in school or college.

P.A: Were there any black teachers in your school or college?
Joyce: No, I had no black teachers in school.

Judy: I went on to a B-TEC Art & Design course that lasted two years. I had always enjoyed art at school. No none at school or college.

Emelda: I did clerical work for a long time actually. In between that I went into the army and did clerical work there as well. After a while I thought I wasn't really

getting anywhere in life so I decided to go back to college. I thought I would get a few 'O' levels. While I was doing that, one of the English Teachers I had, recommended that I do the Access Course and that's how I got into BEd.

P.A:Where there any black teachers in your school or college?
Emelda: At school I remember a Home Economics African Teacher, but she did not stay there too long. I didn't come across any black lecturers at college.

Pamela: I got on a YOP doing Hairdressing. I didn't really enjoy it because I didn't really learn anything. All they wanted me to do was make tea and sweep up hair. After I left that I did secretarial work for about five years on and off. My sister who was studying at college, told me about an Access Course at Bournville College, so I decided to do it.

P.A: Were there any black teachers in your school or college?
Pamela: Yes there was an asian teacher who taught me Maths she was very supportive.

Bertha gained 'A' levels in the sixth-form and went to college for a year. Carol got a job in an office as a Clerical Assistant and later became a Telephonist. Brenda decided to go to college because her school did not offer the 'A' levels she wanted. In Joyce's case she dropped out of college because she found it rather demanding, she

gained employment, got married and divorced and later on in life decided to enter the educational arena again. Judy pursued her love of Art & Design at college. Emelda had done clerical work both inside and outside the army but felt that occupationally she was not getting anywhere. So she decided to go back to college, where she was guided onto an access course.

Pamela had worked as a Hairdresser and a Secretary before she took the advise of a family member to apply for an access course. Only Bertha, Brenda, and Emelda remembered having had a black teacher who they saw as a role model. It is interesting to note that although these students had separate life histories they all except for one, shared a degree of occupational frustration in combination with a firm commitment to 'return to learn'. While it is clear that this tendency is not unique to black students, educational research does seem to suggest that black students are more likely to return to study in full-time further education institutions than their white counterparts, however, this maybe in order to compensate for lower black achievement levels in schools (Singh, 1990).

Motivation For Teacher Education

P.A: What were the motivations that made you start your present course?

Bertha: All along I have always wanted to be a P.E. teacher, even when I was doing my 'A' levels at school I was interested in teaching P.E. It was my own decision but

my cousins have gone through higher education as well, I have always had it at the back of mind that between the three of us its been sort of, who's doing the best who's got the furthest, that sort of thing. My parents are made up about me studying.

Carol: When I left school I wanted to be an Art teacher. All the time I was a clerical assistant, I really wanted to go to college and become an art teacher. I used to do allot of sketchings and spend my lunch times doing sketches for everybody and I did some painting at home. I saw an ad at Dudley college for an Access Course. They invited me for an interview and got offered a place. I did the Access Course for two years. Nobody else in my family has gone into teaching.

Brenda: I always wanted to become a teacher from from when I was young. I thought it would be a rewarding career. No, but my parents were very supportive in my intentions.

Joyce: Basically because I had a good time at school and it was something I wanted to do from when I was at school. Copy your teacher sort of thing. If you had a good teacher then you think you would like to do that. Well, when my children started school I didn't teach my daughter to read and she found it very difficult and when my son went I taught him. He found it difficult because he could read so he had to hang back. I just thought there are so many

problems with children who can't read or write properly. I enjoyed it at school and I didn't like the idea that my children didn't. So I thought I would go in and see if I could help. No, well my mother thinks I should be at home with my children because I'm divorced. Although she likes the idea she still thinks I should be at home.

Judy: I was encouraged to do it by my tutor because I did Access into Art & Design Technology. She said go for your teaching.

Emelda: Originally I wanted do Social Work, but it was recommended that I would be alright for teaching. That was one of the factors. I have got a friend who is a teacher, but no relatives, although my family do support me.

Pamela: I just got fed up with doing boring office work, I needed a change in my life.[.....] I don't think my parents thought I was serious at first, but they are behind me all the way now.

Bertha was driven by a personal ambition to pursue P.E., although it was important for her to know others who had successfully passed through higher education. Carol's motivation appeared to be rooted in unfulfilled expectations, she was frustrated in a job that did not allow her the capacity of artistic expression, so when a 'chance' opportunity arose, she took it with open hands. Brenda had always intended to teach and her parents supported her in

this ambition. Joyce's motivation was related to the inadequacy that she had felt in not to giving her own daughter basic educational support, although she had rectified this in the case of her son, she had come to realise the crucial importance of equipping children at a young age with educational basics. It also appeared that Joyce enjoyed qualified support from her mother, which was important to her. It was clear that Judy had always been interested in Art, but the support and advice of her tutor had been an important factor in decision to teach. In Emelda's case she appeared to be influenced by a tutor and a friend who taught. It seems that Pamela needed a change in her life, she wanted a challenge, and a career in teaching opened up new potential horizons for her.

Impression of the Polytechnic on Interview

P.A: How did you feel when you were interviewed?

Bertha: I didn't think I would be coming here really, I wanted to go to York but I didn't have the grades so I came here. Well, I came to the open day so it wasn't really an interview we were just shown around the place.

Carol: When I came for interview I thought my god the place looked like a concentration camp. Its an awful environment. How people don't commit suicide here I don't know. It doesn't inspire learning in me, there isn't a buzz, its dead. The environment doesn't enthuse me to learn. I think the interview was ok because I have since spoken to other people who went through the same ordeal.

Although the the interview was a shock to my system, because I came along for an interview and ended up having to teach a hypothetical class and I didn't expect it at all. I was really surprised they offered me a place.

Brenda: The interview was ok and they seemed keen to take me on. But I don't really find it a particularly friendly place.

Joyce: I came for interview and was told then that I had got a place. It was straight forward. But I feel the course has been a big let down because they are supposed to be professional people here, its all going to be organised, communication between the departments, communication between the school and there is not. All the time you seem to feel that you are going to be let down and then you wonder whether you have built it up to high. You talk to other students in different subjects or in a whole year and its the same thing. Most of the students grin and bear it and slog on.

Judy: Yeah, the interview was ok but on the day I came there was a mix up with interviews and so it was quite rushed. It was quite fair and friendly.

Emelda: The lady I had was up on multicultural issues. In that way I didn't feel sort of rejected. I was interviewed by one white person. The more I was looking around the more I was the one black person there. Literally that's it

really. I did feel a bit secluded. Yes I do feel as if I am on my own yeah, because I think if you have got somebody who is really say, black and they are there with you on the course then you tend to feel more secure don't you?

Pamela: It seemed like an ok kind of place. The interview was alright, although I was a bit nervous.

Although the majority of the student teachers appeared to have been satisfied with their initial interviews, Joyce was unhappy with what she saw as the lack of communication between departments and between the overall course and schools. Emelda comments suggested that from her observations she felt isolated as a black person on her course due to the lack of substantial numbers of black students. While it is true that all students have to learn to get used to the demands of studying in a higher educational structure, race and gender as lived realities mediate, and indeed shape that experience.

Views on Subjects Studied

P.A: What are your views on the subjects that you study?

Bertha: Psychology and Sports Studies are really good, but I find I'm not a hundred percent interested in Education.

Carol: I thought it was rather repetitive, we have to devise these teaching ideas and you get an example and you get into your little groups and you come up with

another idea and you go around and see what everybody has come up with and then you get a handout. When you have done this all day, you just want to get home quick. After second teaching practice allot of us felt there was no point in coming back because we could have done the rest by correspondence. There was a farce when you are sent out for two weeks into school and who ever organised that needs shooting. I was sent out to a school. I made lots of notes and nobody has referred to anything, you go and do your stint in the school and you come back and it gone, its forgotten, nobody is interested. That two weeks was a waste of time.

Brenda: I find most of the subjects ok, but I do wish we could go into more detail,particularly in history. I feel that the lecturer only seems to gloss over the issues.

Joyce: I like the subjects, its not the subjects that's the problem. It tends to be the way the lectures are given. Its like the lecturers have got a standard routine and if you slightly disagree you are in trouble. You have got to do the set routine, your work has got to be done a set way and all that kind of thing. You can't veer off the straight and narrow,you get pulled back in. Again there is allot of disappointment because of the course content. It looks good on paper and you think great I will enjoy doing that, but your are never specifically told what they expect from you, you find out the hard way. Religious studies it plods on, you don't raise any strong issues at all. It becomes a

routine, it just carries on year after year its all the same, they don't bring anything new in, that's what I could criticise. The one (.....) teacher just carries on his own world and nothing else matters as long as he gets his subject out and that's it.

Judy: I have no complaints really they are all fine.

Emelda: I really don't enjoy the education part of the course itself. I like going into the school,the experience in school is much better. I find the actual education side quite boring. You are not given full facts, they just literally skim over things. But being in school you get the experience, you learn by trial and error don't you ?. In education you are given certain facts without it actually being tried out if you know what I mean, and in certain areas you are not given enough detail. I mean in Science for example, your not literally told how to teach. This is why I say it is best to go into school. You watch other people doing things, you pick things up that way. Whereas in education you are not told how to do certain things.

Pamela:I find Psychology rather boring and unimaginative. All we get is handouts. The lecturer is not very patient. If you don't understand something he just tells you to read your notes. Overall I enjoy English, but that's probably because its my major.

Bertha appeared to enjoy Psychology and Sports Studies but was not very enthusiastic about Education. Meanwhile Carol was

critical of the way in which the subjects were taught and the lack of linkage between the theoretical and practical elements of teaching. Although Brenda was generally satisfied with subjects she did wish for more detailed analysis. In a similar way, Joyce enjoyed her actual subjects, but she was unhappy with what she saw as regimented, inflexible, and unstimulating delivery. It appeared that Judy was satisfied with her subjects, while Pamela had mixed emotions, in the sense that she enjoyed English but found Psychology to be rather dull. From the students comments, it would seem that there is a wider issue here about student expectations and curriculum delivery and a specific issue about the perceived narrow and non-challenging nature of parts of the curriculum.

Specific Views on Multicultural/ Anti-Racist Course Content

P.A: *Does your course reflect a multicultural or anti-racist perspective?*

Bertha: *Psychology does, Sports Studies does not really touch upon those issues. In Education it has slightly, but it does not really deal with it adequately. In our Independent Study time, we go looking in educational newspapers and racial issues come up there, but not really within the college curriculum.*

P.A: *How do you think it could be improved?*

Bertha: With education it could be highlighted more strongly with discussion in the lecture and that.

Carol: First of all I haven't been lectured by any Afro-Caribbean or Asian lecturers. They have all been white. If your going to be multi-ethnic you really need to have some multi-ethnic teaching staff. We have had a course on multicultural education and anti-racism. They didn't really come up with anything new its all the same stuff, the same old books the same old issue. There wasn't a lesson where you deliberately had to analyse material. That would have been more constructive, then you could say that this or that could be conceived as racist or sexist. I think it was left largely up to the students to bear these things in mind. If you are not the kind of person who is really bothered about the content of the material then you can get by with it. But I don't think the lecturers would tolerate racist or sexist slogans if you devised it for a teaching activity.

Brenda: On the basis of the subjects I have studied so far, I would say that multicultural issues just aren't treated as an important part of the curriculum. In history, it hasn't been addressed properly.

Joyce: The Afro-Caribbean experience no, full stop. I am doing Religious Studies that's my main subject and you don't do anything that comes under Afro-Caribbean at all. I mean with religious studies we have done Hindu religion

and Sikhism and things like that, but nothing to do with Afro-Caribbeans.

P.A: How do you think it could be improved ?

Joyce: Well I think you have got do mini modules on new religions, on new aspects. You have got to include some of them because that is what the children are experiencing, and your going to get into that classroom and your not going to be able to relate to them fully.

Judy: In English we do and Media Studies, that goes into ethnic minorities. But Art & Design doesn't.

Emelda: I think you need more input. When you go into certain schools, I mean for instance I am in a school now where its literally all white, there is just one black child in it. You go to a school like that,they need to know about multicultural aspects as well. Which is not really covered as much in college I don't think. I mean I am doing Religions of the world, and that is really the only multicultural thing I have come across in this particular school. On the West-Indian side that's not been touched on either in school. Its got to be part of the history as well hasn't it ? You need people who have the necessary know how, they need lecturers, perhaps black lecturers that could actually cover that side to it. I think students need to have that particular input as well, especially the ones that don't really don't come into contact with black people

as such,they need to understand that. Because that's one of the things that they find when they go to a multicultural school,they really can't cope with it because they have not got enough input. They don't understand the children.

Pamela: There is very little multicultural education as such. In one lecture we saw a video on ant-racism in the classroom, but there was not enough discussion of the issues it raised. I felt that some white students didn't know how to talk about 'race'. It has got to be more central to the course, with black people involved.

From Bertha's comments it was clear that she did not feel that issues around race and racism were adequately discussed in her subjects and she even advocated ways in which the curriculum could be altered to incorporate such issues more fully. Carol's comments were interesting as she linked curicula issues around multiculturalism directly to the employment of black staff. This was an important point as it could be viewed as an indicator of the institutions commitment to race equality issues. Carol's analysis of the multicultural component of her course indicated that it needed to be more challenging of racist practices by deconstructing them through practical examination of specific material. Brenda felt that her subjects did not really deal adequately with black issues. Joyce was concerned that although her course did discuss ethnic religions, the african-caribbean religious experience was none-existant. She felt that this oversight could be dealt with by creating new 'mini modules' that could further educate student teachers for the classroom situation. In

the case of Judy, she felt that English and Media Studies were multicultural but Art & Design was not. Emelda's comments were similar to Joyce's, particularly on the issue of black staff and the omission of an African-Caribbean presence in 'Religions of the World'. Emelda then went on to make a crucial point about the need for a multiracial approach in those schools which may have only a few black children. In some ways Pamela's comments mirrored those of Carol's about the need for a more indepth analysis of racism.

Racist/Sexist Incidents

P.A.: Have you experienced or witnessed any racist or sexist behaviour while on your course?

Bertha: No.

Carol: No, you just come and go to your classes and you work in the library and go home.

Brenda: I notice sometimes with Asian students when they are being talked to by the lecturers they actually explain something to them slowly as though they have not got the sense to understand what's being said. If they have got to read something out they will be asked if they can manage it. To get on this course you have got to have some sense, but they don't seem to take that into consideration.

Joyce: Yes sexism, because that's the thing with some of the lecturers they don't mind if you leave early, but its usually the women who don't mind because you have to get back to your children. One male lecturer in particular asked me why I couldn't leave my child with a neighbour, and he made one of the students cry because she had to take her child to the hospital. There is that sort of thing, its like you have got to be dedicated to the course and nothing else.

Judy: No.

Emelda: No, I think I have been lucky. But I would not say that others have not encountered it, but me as whole, I been lucky so far.

Pamela: No overt racism.

The comments of Bertha, Carol, Judy, Emelda and Pamela suggested that they did feel that they had experienced any racist incidents while on the course. Brenda's felt that the treatment of some asian students on her course was racist, as their cultural origins were linked to set of stereotypes i.e. black people can't understand or speak good English because they are backward or remedial in some way. Joyce did feel that she had experienced and observed sexist behaviour from a male lecturer. While the students on this particular course had not apparently been the victims of racism themselves, the issue of racism on initial teacher education programmes courses generally has been brought into sharp focus research over the last few years. Educational research by Cole (1989) has highlighted the urgent need to challenge racist

attitudes of white students on BEd courses, while Iram Siraj-Blatchford (1990) has showed that the positive perceptions of teaching that black students bring with them can be systematically undermined by being subjected to direct and indirect racism within teacher training establishments and on teaching practice.

The persistence of racism within this context must also be linked to the New Right's sustained attack on teacher education generally and anti-racism specifically which has created a fertile breeding ground for the born-again racists to preach their doctrine of cultural superiority at the expense of 'ethnic diversity' (Gordon, 1989; Clay, Cole, and Hill, 1990).

Relationships With Significant Others

P.A:What kind of relationship do you have with other black students?

Bertha: In Psychology there are some black people. But on campus all my friends are white. Psychology is a big lecture so you don't really get in contact with other students. I play netball and there are a few black girls in the team, but that's it really. The relationship with my lecturers is alright.

Carol: We [black students] see each other around but we don't actually get together and do anything as such. The one guy I knew from years ago so we interact more, infact the girl on my course I knew from years ago as well. It is

amazing these people turning up..There are four other black students on the course, we meet up for various options. I think there are three main lecturers and I think I could approach any of them, but its the degree of how much you interact with them. The one who came out to see me on teaching practice most often, we sat and had long discussions.

Brenda: I only really know one other black student on my course, and I would say that we get on quite well. Some of the lecturers are approachable, some aren't. I would say its the same with white students.

Joyce: Yes they are three Asians and that's all. Yes we get on, infact the whole group gets on.

Judy: There are no other black students on my course.

Emelda: There are a few yes. The thing is that we really don't come into contact. It all depends on the subject that you are doing. In my particular year I am the only black person doing P.E. Well its like everything else isn't it, you get on with some (students & staff) and some you just either leave them alone or whatever. If you are alright with them they are alright with you.

Pamela: There is only one other black student on my course. we only really see each other in lecturers.

It was evident from Bertha's comments that although she was in contact with other black students she did not feel a strong identification with those students. Carol's interaction with other black students on her course was interesting because although she had known two of her fellow students previously, she did not seem to exhibit feelings of strong group solidarity. In Brenda's case her group identification was restricted due to the fact that there was only one other black person her course. Joyce felt that there was black group solidarity. Both Judy, Emelda and Pamela's responses indicated that black group identification was hampered because of the relative degree of isolation experienced on their courses.

Without doubt the lack of a sizeable black student population on the courses seemed to foster a more individualised outlook, which subliminally may have been linked to a deeper isolation. There did not appear to be a strong feeling of black unity. My limited observations of the black geography of students on campus suggested that they were far more widely dispersed than the black construction workers had been.

P.A: How well do you get on with your lecturers and fellow students?

Bertha: The relationship with my lecturers is alright and I have some good friends.

Carol: I think there are three main lecturers and I think I could approach any of them.....the one who came out to

see me on teaching practice most often would sit and have long discussions.

Brenda: Some of the lecturers are approachable some aren't. I would say its the same with white students.

Joyce: I suppose they are ok.

Judy: I get on with white staff and students alike.

Emelda: Well its like everything else isn't it, you get on with some (students and staff) and some you just either leave them alone or whatever. If you are alright with them they are alright with you.

Pamela: I have no problems with staff or other students.

The overwhelming response from Bertha, Carol, Brenda, Joyce, Judy, Emelda, and Pamela was that had a good relationship with staff and students on their courses.

Experiences of Teaching Practice

How would you describe your experiences on teaching practice?

Bertha: My first teaching practice went reasonably well, I was teaching P.E. in a primary school. Although some of

the staff were very supportive, I came across one or two who were very apathetic towards me.

Carol: I enjoyed doing Art with kids, but I didn't really get on with the Art teacher, there was just something there. I just could not go to her and discuss what I was doing. I felt at times that I was talking to an empty space. There was not one other black lecturer in that staffroom. I felt quite alienated really, being the only black person there.

Brenda: I had a good time on my TP teaching history. I found it very stimulating. The staff were quite helpful too.

Joyce: Well it was the school in the next street from me. It was the one my children went to so I wasn't looking forward to going there at first but I had a good time. Some of the other students had a rough time but I suppose its because they knew me, so it wasn't so bad. I found that if anything put me off teaching it would not be the children it would be the teachers, because they don't communicate with each other. Its like there is some kind of professional rivalry between them and they are always tense with each other. I was there about three months. You can use some of your classroom knowledge, but I think you tend to use your own experiences from when you were at school. But there is a lack of communication between the college and the school. I mean, even the day

you go there is wrong. The college sends you there towards the end of term, the end of school year. So your work what they are expecting you to do has already been done and you either do what's left over, what the school hasn't done on its curriculum, or prepare the children for sports day.

Judy: So far I have only had one TP and that wasn't too bad. The children seemed to respond well in the classes I took.

Emelda: My first year I felt very stressful because I was new to it.[Teaching Practice] I found it hard to get into it at first, teaching-wise. I enjoyed my second TP and even my third and fourth year have been alright because I have learned allot. I get on with the teachers but I have also learnt to keep myself at a distance as well if you know what I mean. If you tell too much sometimes it can go against you. I have a good relationship with the children, although I am really surprised because none of them have actually said anything to me about being black. I mean if they are thinking it they are not saying it.

Pamela: My first TP was not very good. But my second was allot better, partly because the staff at the second school were more positive about my teaching ability.

Bertha's appeared to be satisfied with her teaching practice, although she felt some of the teaching staff were not as supportive as they could have been. Carol also experienced personal tension with a member of staff on her teaching practice and also felt quite isolated being the only black teacher in staffroom. In some ways Carol' experience mirrored the alienation that Julie [from the black construction course] had felt on her placement. In contrast Brenda and Judy appeared to have a constructive teaching practice with Brenda receiving support from the staff. Joyce enjoyed teaching the children on her teaching practice but was critical of what she perceived as professional rivalry between the teachers and lack of communication between the polytechnic and the school. Emelda's response was interesting because she was the first student to mention her colour as an important variable in classroom interaction with her pupils. Like Emelda, Judy's felt that by her second teaching practice she was learning to ply her trade.

Black Role Model/Views on Black Representation on ITE/Views on Black Access Courses

P.A.: Do you see yourself as a black role model?

Bertha: Well coming here is really different from home because in this environment there are loads of different races and that. At home it was a really white dominated environment so I am just used to being with white people. I was saying to my friend, god I really feel at home here here. I mean its really different. I don't know if I see

myself as a black role model, I think it depends on what kind of environment you have been brought up in.

Carol: People have said this [being a black role model] but its a bit pretentious isn't it. I am just another person, if you want to put it like that yes I am a role model but its not something you think about. I suppose its good for my children. If you are aspiring to be white you are aspiring to be like you're oppressors and if you are going to take on their identity it is madness. To recruit more black students you have to be pretty radical, I mean there is no other way about it. There are lots of people, black young people who don't realise who they are or what they are, they think they are black British, they are born here but thy are not accepted as such, you know they are just black. Unless someone is actually conscious of who they are and where they fit in to the structure they really can't do anything about it. You can have a false consciousness and you can think that your black British and that you can get by, and you can go out and study and you don't realise your loyalties to your own people, to yourself really. I think that there is something missing in that for these people. Consciousness raising is the first stage, you have got to get out there and show people things. People have to stop and realise this and look at their children going through school and coming out and not getting the opportunities..... We have to work twice as hard, we realise that and largely speaking those of us that

have gone to further and higher education have done that because that is what we have to do.

Brenda: Well on my first TP I was more concerned about survival in the classroom. But it has always been at the back of my mind that I was an ambassador for black people.

Joyce: Well I want to see myself ideally as someone who is training to be a teacher but I went into school and one of the pupils asked me how come I could speak English. I was stunned for words, so I thought well obviously I have got to be a black teacher to them. So that's something I can't hide or change, so perhaps I should be changing my approach and sort of thing. It is difficult what to say because I have been in multicultural schools, so the children are used to seeing me,but in this school it was different.

Judy: I haven't really thought about that. At the moment I just see myself as a student training to be a teacher.

Emelda: I have not thought about it. I see myself as a teacher and then a black teacher. I have not got any hangs-ups about me as a black person But really I don't want to think of myself as being just a black teacher. I want to see myself as a teacher. I think at one stage I thought I was not good enough to be a teacher, the fact I

had low CSE grades, I have always thought to myself that I was thick.

Pamela: I don't really see myself as a black role model, I am just a person who wants to teach.

Bertha seemed uncertain as to whether or not she was a black role model she seemed to suggest that ones background and environment would shape your views on such a matter. Carol did reluctantly appear to identify her self as a black role model but felt that it was more important for black people to know who they were as a 'race'. For Carol the notion of being 'black British' was not a realistic position for young black people to adopt, rather it was part of what she called a 'false consciousness', which coned some people into believing that they could be accepted if they moved closer to 'white' constructs of society and further away from black ones. The apparent sceptical stance adopted by Carol seemed to be advocating the need for consciousness raising in black communities around the what she perceived as being the facts of 'blackness'.

In the case of Brenda the issue appeared to be straight forward, she was a black role model. Joyce's responses were very illuminating as she did not see her self primarily as a black teacher but that issue was brought home to her by the comments of a pupil who did perceive her as being black. Judy had not given the issue a great deal of thought and was still coming to terms with its implications. Like Joyce, Emelda and Pamela did not see themselves as black role models, they were just teachers,

however, as Joyce's experience will testify significant others may not share that perception. The competing attitudes towards the notion of role models, in many ways exposes the ideological aspects of this concept. At one level role model is individualised, it is about self achievement, at another it is about potential group representation and achievement. Role model, like 'meritocracy' can be used to justify both elitist and exlusionary practices. Black student contestations at the level of experience points to the complex interplay of ideology and lived reality.

P.A: What do you feel about Black only Access Courses?

Bertha: I think Black Access Courses encourages segregation kind of thing. I prefer it to be more multiracial.

Carol: Personally Black only Access Courses would be a good idea because it would be a way of attracting more more black people into education.

Brenda: Normal Access Courses are fine I don't believe Black only Courses are necessary.

Joyce: I did an Access Course at Dudley and there was an option to do the Access Course for ethnic minorities who wanted to go into teaching and I stayed on the ordinary Access Course because I thought the black course was going too far the other way. With the ordinary Access Course there isn't really a black side to it at all, so

perhaps there should be some there. I don't see why they couldn't combine the two. To me, if you want to be a teacher you should get your education regardless of whether you are black or white. They shouldn't need an Access Course for ethnic minorities, normal Access Courses should incorporate that element in it. That's why I didn't go on it. I was asked by one of the lecturers why I hadn't gone on that course. I said what's so special about me that I should go on that course?. You get pigeon holed as a black person.

Judy: I'm not sure that is the way, I think black people need to be encouraged yeah but I'm not so sure about black only courses.

Emelda: There again its alright for you to say your going to open a course for black people but are they going to be aware that the course is there for them to actually take it ?. Until that teacher actually said to me that I could go on an Access Course, I knew nothing about it. So they have to know about the facilities. Is it necessary to segregate do you think?

Pamela: I am not sure I agree with black only Access courses, I will have to think about that one!

This particular question sparked off some interesting responses. Bertha viewed such courses as examples of segregation. While Carol took the opposite view and saw them as positive black

recruitment initiatives. Brenda and Judy, like Bertha, was not in favour of such courses. Joyce's position was interesting in that she had rejected going on such a course precisely because it was segregated and packaged as being 'special'. Joyce wanted to be treated normally and could not see why 'the black side' was not part of the conventional Access Course. In the light of these important points where do we locate the black construction course in relation to what is being discussed here. Clearly it is not an Access Course, but it is a black only course. At a deeper level Joyce's comments reflected the same point that Balbir and Joseph made about being on the construction course. Both Emelda and Pamela were undecided about the value of such course, the question had indeed given them food for thought.

Financial Problems

P.A:Have you encountered any financial problems while on your course?

Bertha: No I haven't.

Carol: Yes I'm broke. I had a student loan and it went in and out of the bank. What can you do with £420 pounds. You have to pay it back and I'm not sure what the interest rate is. I will have to try and pay it off with my overdraft.

Brenda: Its very hard but I'm just about surviving.

Joyce: Yes I have because I was divorced before I was on Social Security. But this time the grant is more, but I've got more things to buy like books and school equipment, so it is difficult. Its a bit better this term because I have learnt to handle my money better, but its still very tight. I think the grant should be higher, because of my age if I had earned over twelve thousand pounds the three years before I started college I could have had about nine hundred pounds extra on my grant. But obviously on Social Security you don't get that much money so I think they ought to change that.

Judy: The grant has nearly gone this term, that's the rent, cause I rent a house. It is not a very good idea that loan system, but I might have to use it anyway.

Emelda: Yes I have. Although you get the grant it is not enough. The worst time is during the summer. I don't really agree with it. I think it is trying to put students into debt. It will put off allot of black people going into teaching.

Pamela: So far I've been ok, but its becoming harder and harder to make ends meet.

Bertha was the only black student who did not appear to have financial worries. Carol and Judy were very unhappy with student loan system. Joyce was just beginning to come to terms with handling her limited finances but still finding it a strain. Emelda

made the point that the loan system would particularly deter potential black teachers. Pamela was finding it difficult to survive.

Perceived Occupational Destination

P.A: What kind of employment are you hoping to obtain?

Bertha: I hope to teach P.E. in a Junior school, but in terms of actually getting a job I think that probably on interview white people would be chosen before a black person.

Carol: I am a positive person and my dream has always been to become an Art Teacher. However, I accept that racism is a fact of life and I will have to confront it.

Brenda: Well I am optimistic about getting a job teaching history because their is a shortage of black teachers generally.

Joyce: I would like to teach R.E, but I didn't look at my colour in that way, but again that was me being naive. I would be very surprised if it didn't make a difference.

Judy: I should get a job eventually teaching Art, I think it depends on where I apply.

Emelda: Although I sometimes think that a black person has got to be twice as good. Well that's how I look at it anyway.

Pamela: To be honest, I don't really think about it..

Bertha felt that her colour could could work against her in finding employment, as did Emelda. Carol, although mindful of racism felt that she would not let it hinder her employment prospects. Bertha saw her colour as a positive asset in gaining employment. For Judy, her employment depended on where she applied. Joyce and Pamela's comments revealed a reluctance to probe the issue.

I would have liked to have found out exactly where these Black BEd students ended up, but due to administrative problems it was not possible for me do any follow up work. However, I did manage to get some data from the Polytechnics Careers Advice Centre, on graduates first destinations. It would appear from the data that in 1990, 82% of graduates from the Faculty of Education obtained permanent employment. Thus despite the spectre of discrimination there is every chance that some or even all of the black graduates in my study got teaching jobs.

Views About The Interview

P.A.: What are your comments about this interview?

Bertha: It brings to mind allot of things that you don't really think about allot. It makes you really think.

Carol: The interview has reinforced my own view that the problem is not at polytechnic or university level. The problem is back down there in the schools. If you are not getting what you need and the encouragement and being able to identify and realise who you are and be positive about yourself then you are not going to go on into further or higher education. The problem has to be dealt with lower down.

Brenda: I think perhaps it has made me become more aware of such issues.

Joyce: Well when you first asked me I thought 'opps' because I am not your typical black person. I mean the school I went to there was only my family and another family there, so I was the only black girl in the class. That is the way its been through my infant, junior and senior school. So I am not heavily into black culture, neither is my family. I mean we are the only black family on the estate. So if I spoke more Jamaican I don't know whether I would feel as if I was treated differently or singled out because of my accent. So I was wondering if my answers to you were black enough!

Carol and Joyce's comments are worth further discussion as they both make interesting points. Carol believes that the interview process has vindicated her views about where black access has to start, i.e. in schools and colleges and through the construction of black positive identities.

Joyce's comments were quite revealing because she did not see herself as someone who defended 'black issues', or as a 'typical black person'. Yet in earlier discussions Joyce was able to point to what she saw as the failure of her course to deliver important elements of 'multiculturalism', *'.....you don't do anything that comes under Afro-Caribbean at all'*. There seemed to be hidden tensions in Joyce's account in that she was aware of a particular construct of what it is to be black, yet at the same time feeling that she was not a part of that construct.

Chapter Five has raised interesting issues about black student experience. Chapter Six will further explore black lived realities on the third and final Diploma of Higher Education Course.

CHAPTER 5. DiP HE COURSE

Background to Dip HE Course

In 1975 the Diploma in Higher Education was launched as a vehicle for the direct entry of mature students on to degree courses. It catered for those who lacked formal qualifications. One key characteristic of the Dip HE has been its flexibility. The Dip HE that exists in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences is a two year multi-exit course that offers a possible transfer to a degree programme. Black participation on Dip HE during 1990-91 was 19%. I was able to locate students for interview partly with the help of staff and from my own deliberations with available

students on campus. Eight Dip HE students were interviewed in depth in my office for between half and one and a half hours in empty classrooms. What follows is an account of those interviews with Betty (25), Kalwant (23), Leroy (26), Sukhbir (22), Valarie (27), Grace,(30) Hazel,(28) and Delroy (29).

Experiences of Schooling

P.A: How would you describe your schooling?

Betty: The teachers were very racist, they used to call us 'monkeys' and baboons'. They had very low expectations of us.

Kalwant: I came from another school and was put in the bottom class. Black parents fought for their children to be put into 'O' level classes. fifty per cent of the bottom group could have done 'O' levels and 'A' levels.

Leroy: The school I went to streamed into 'O' levels and CSE's. I was told I could only do CSE"s. I noticed that most of the blacks were doing CSE"s. The few blacks who did 'O' levels were seen as 'snobs' and were teased by other black pupils.

Sukhbir: One or two of the teachers were racist. I was the only asian girl in the sixth-form. I felt that teachers had preconceived ideas about asian students. Although some teachers tried to put me down, such negative things made me react positively.

Valarie: I always wanted a black teacher, but I never got one. One of the teachers called me a 'black bastard.

Grace: I was the fist black child in infant school, I became an object of ridicule. I had to fight my way through, and I became stereotyped through junior and secondary school.

Hazel: I came from Brent who were into racial equality. If I didn't do well, it was me, not the teachers. I had lots of encouragement from teacher.

Delroy: My school did not value black pupils, they didn't see any potential in us. Black children were geared towards sport. The captains of the teams were always white, teachers always allocated white captains.

All the dip he students, with the exception of Hazel, reported very negative feelings associated with their past schooling. The majority of these students saw racism as a key factor in their assessment. Indeed a report carried out by The Voice newspaper and Warwick University (1990) entitled 'School Experiences & Career Aspirations Of Afro-Caribbean 16-30 Year Olds', found that the levels of racism and harassment in schools were considerable.

Post School Education and Work

P.A. : What did you do when you left school?

Betty: After school I got a job in a factory as assembling pots and pans. Then I got work as a packer in a warehouse.

Kalwant: Once I got my 'A' levels at college, I applied to University and Polytechnic for a place.

Leroy: I had worked as a Labourer and Machine Operator over the past 6 years. I hated having to work in dirt and grease.

Sukhbir: I managed to get a job working part-time in the British Library in London, while I was completing my 'A' levels at college.

Grace: I went to college for two years, then got a job as an Employment Officer at Birmingham Career's Centre.

Hazel: I was employed in a nursery for three years.

Delroy: Once I finished school, I worked in a record shop for about 2 years, after that I went to college.

Both Betty and Leroy had experienced the rigours of manual work and wanted desperately to find a way out. Kalwant and Sukhbir were steadily working there way through 'A' levels. Delroy and Grace after working for a couple of years went back to college to study. While Valarie had pursued a nursing career.

Motivation for Dip HE

P.A: Why did you decide to study on the course?

Betty: I got fed up, I wanted to do something with my life. I felt I was in the wilderness. I had left school with nothing, and I had a succession of crap jobs. I wanted to put all the frustration behind me and just get into the poly.

Kalwant: There was no question but to do 'A' levels. I had enjoyed Economics and Biology at 'O' level.

Leroy: Because I was working full time, I did not have the time to do 'A' levels. I decided to do the Access Course over two years, six till nine on Mondays, six hours a week at Bournville College.

Sukhbir: It was the natural path after 'O' levels. You cannot get a very good job with 'O' levels. My parents expected me to do 'A' levels.

Valarie: After I left school, I decided to go into nursing. But my sister told me about dip he, and I thought that with a degree I could get further in nursing.

Grace: When working at the job centre I was treated as an inferior by other members of staff. I had to realise my true potential.

Hazel: There was more to life than being a Nursery Nurse, I need a challenge.

Delroy: I had failed my 'O' levels at college. I didn't want to keep on failing, time was moving on.

It appeared that Betty felt that her life was in a rut and needed some kind of dramatic change. Kalwant on the other hand had her educational pathway virtually mapped-out, from 'O' levels to 'A' levels from 'A' levels to degree. In some ways Leroy's position was similar to Betty's in the sense that he felt frustrated with his job because he wanted something better. Sukhbir's position was quite similar to Kalwants in terms of perceived natural progression, and Sukhbir's parental expectations were a very important motivational factor. Valarie saw her potential degree as an investment for her deferred career in nursing. It appears that Grace felt that she was being exploited and devalued in her job, and this spurred her to become equipped with high a high level qualification. Again we see in the comments of Hazel and Delroy a commitment to improve themselves. This belief in the power of educational credentials was mirrored by the majority of the BEd students, although these Dip HE students did not recall positive experiences of schooling. The Dip HE students were re-entering education but now were older and wiser, with their own agenda.

Views on Subjects Studied

P.A: What are your views on the subjects that you study?

Betty: I can only relate to black things, there seems to be a lack of understanding of black people.

Kalwant: I cannot relate to High Art, its just not me. I tend to explore issues concerned with black people. I feel English heritage doesn't belong to me.

Leroy: I think certain modules didn't give any consideration to racial equality issues, especially the ones I've done, like Social Policy. I can't say they have given any consideration to it.

Sukhbir: I feel comfortable with Social Science modules.

Valarie: I find some of the subjects rather dull actually.

Grace: Its all too narrow, nothing I can relate to. Its from all one angle, very European.

Hazel: I think the subjects could have been allot better. I did Sociology and Philosophy, I did feel that issues of race were not tackled properly it was skimmed. I think its the way lecturers are, there is not a lot of understanding. I don't know its hard, you can't make them understand the way you feel as a person and your experience.

Delroy: So far its alright, but nothing special.

Both Betty and Kalwant's comments suggest that they had difficulty identifying themselves with the subjects that they was studying. Leroy, Grace, and Hazel felt that there seemed to be a lack of understanding concerning the presentation of black issues.These students appeared to feel quite alienated by aspects of the curriculum. Sukhbir, Valarie and Delroy appeared to be relatively more satisfied with their subjects.

Specific Views on Multicultural/Anti-Racist Course Content

P.A: How do you feel issues around 'race' and racism are tackled in your subjects?

Betty: Certain lecturers will be direct and tell it like it is, others will skirt around the issue. Black students do have their say.

Kalwant: They don't tackle it properly, they do it for the sake of it, in a piecemeal way.

Leroy: Lecturers don't want to talk about it. They are racist themselves. Those who do are patronising to black students. In essays they don't want to know about your experiences, only what white researchers have found.

Sukhbir: Race issues are dealt with adequately in Sociology.

Valarie: I tend to be dubious of white lecturers because they are not black. I tend to be sceptical. How can they know? They are not black. If a black person was teaching me I would feel differently.

Grace: To be frank I do not consider anti-racist initiatives taken by the Polytechnic to be anything more than a polite gesture to black students as a whole. Race issues are often discussed as nothing more than another social issue within certain subjects. Steps have to be taken apart from a few statements from the Poly, which have been ineffective in terms of lecturers attitudes in the classroom and marking of assignments. I think race issues need to be a compulsory part of all module choices available to students, and not just an option. In this way it can fully be dealt with at all levels within the Polytechnic and not shunned as a radical arena for debate.

Hazel: I think you should have some kind of anti-racism, but it shouldn't be labelled anti-racism. I think it should be part of the poly. It should be a platform for the poly. It shouldn't be 'oh we are having an anti-racist policy,' that to me is just superficial, it has got to reflect reality.

Delroy: I suppose it depends on the modules.

It was evident that most of the students apart from Sukhbir and Delroy felt unhappy with the way that issues of race and racism were tackled in the curriculum. It was interesting the way Hazel

and Grace perceived the issue in wider terms as a failing of the institution as a whole. Also Grace's comments suggested a certain distrust in the commitment of some lecturers to valuing their presence in the institution and marking their work fairly.

The central theme that emerged from this and in the previous section, was the overall dissatisfaction in the way that race equality issues had failed to permeate their courses in a more rigourous way. Indeed it would appear that the 'hidden curriculum' was at work, in the sense that these students felt that a grounded experience of being black was not given due respect by the HE curriculum. Research carried out by Breinburg (1987) has suggested that their is a distinctive 'black perspective in higher education' generally, and this manifests itself in the way white professionals concern themselves with access and underrepresentation, in the understanding of black access issues. While black professionals and students are more concerned with curriculum content, as she states:

> **The evidence presented show that there is a difference between white and black concepts on the fundamental question of what is meant by a black perspective in higher education. The former think it pertains mainly to access and numbers of black students in higher education, while the latter view it as meaning the curriculum content and aspects of presentation (Breinburg, 1987:37).**

While I would agree with Breinburg that a black perspective does exist, I would argue that on the basis of my research,it would appear that black students place just as much emphasis on the presence of black students and lecturers in the institution.

Racist/Sexist Incidents

P.A: Have you encountered or witnessed any racist or sexist incidents while on your course?

Betty: The Accommodation person for the Halls of Residence didn't want to give me a flat. But she offered it to white students. I realised the person was racist, she could defend her actions. It would be your word against hers.

Kalwant: No not openly.

Leroy: When I lived with white students, the first time I came into the kitchen they all went silent. Later on they told me that they thought I had come to rob the place, they didn't think I was a student.

Sukhbir: My interpretation of a particular incident was serious.

Valarie: Although I don't really look for it, you must prepare yourself.

Grace: The problem is that racism is not always obvious.

Hazel: Not directly but but indirectly from students.

Delroy: Personally no, but that doesn't mean its not there.

It was clear from the responses that all of the students held the view that racism existed in the institution, but only Betty and Leroy were able to give concrete examples of such racism. However, the central theme that came out of this questioning of these particular students, was that racism was perceived to be part and parcel of the high educational terrain. This important issue was brought into sharpe focus by Rosen (1990) in her research on black and white students at North London Polytechnic, she observed that:

> **....What was the most remarkable thing about these interviews was that the overwhelming majority of black students raised the subject of racism at a very early point in the discussion. No white student did so. Where it was raised by those in the latter group it was done tangentially and it was clear that their construct of the word was totally different from that of those who were black. It was evident that it is hard for a white person even to begin to understand the violence that racism does the outlook of a black person who lives in a white oriented society....Certainly most black students commented on receiving either direct racial prejudice or institutional racism, usually both, during their growing up....It is not surprising that difficulties were seen as part of a conspiracy directed against black students (Rosen, 1990: 67).**

The evidence accumulating in this section appears to point to the existence of a black meaning system which shapes black students outlook within the institution, but little is known of its historical formation or its internal epistemology. In the chapter on Black Consciousness, I will attempt to create a framework which seeks to adequately makes sense of this specific 'meaning system'.

Relationships with Significant Others

What kind of a relationship do you have with other black students on your course?

Betty: People will help you with books etc. In the first year we worked as team. This brings you into contact with other blacks and from that a relationship is formed.

Kalwant: I don't know many other asians but from what I see, blacks stick together more.

Leroy: Although we sat together collectively in groups we didn't know each other, but we all sat together. It was an unconscious thing.

Sukhbir: I do see group solidarity among black students.

Valarie: The attitudes of the students and staff pretend to foster equality but they don't like you. Its so patronising you know they are racist. Education doesn't change racism. Some of the white students do not talk to you, or only when they want something. They ask you 'why do you black students go around in groups?'

Grace: Second year black students would willingly give you information and work. There is a black network.

Hazel: It gives you a sense of security, it motivates you to discuss things and deal with it. It gives you mutual

support and counselling. The moral support means that you have got to get through for yourselves and for black people generally. We are in a white institution, we have to encourage each other to be proud. We are role models.

Delroy: I don't feel it here in Dudley, but its strong in Wolverhampton. There is a black dream to work hard and prove yourself.

It was clear that for these students a strong group identity existed. The comments of Betty and Grace in particular focused on the practical, educational benefits of this informal learning circle. While the comments of Valarie and Hazel pointed to the more social and psychological benefits of having such a support mechanism. From the comments of the students it would appear that this informal support network was grounded in a particular view of the power relationship between white educational institutions and black students within them. Indeed, from my direct observations and interaction in the field, I identified a particular black meeting place within the institution. This black geography of the institution was located on a group of tables in the canteen where predominantly african-caribbean and asian Dip HE students would congregate, and discuss the pedagogies and practices of the institution. It was in the realm of the 'Black space' where black realities, identities and strategies were continually being replenished by the group.

So for these black students, their race was seen as central to the way they both experienced and understood the process of academic life on their course, and the often overt and subtle forms of racism. The mere fact that such informal learning circles exist within HE structures, may suggest that the formal support networks that exist such as student counsellors and personal tutors, may be unable in some instances, to respond to the specific needs of black students in HE. The FEU's (1986) study of Black Students & Entry To Higher Education, pointed to the specific obstacles faced by black Access students on their entry to higher education and showed the way black access students established their own informal support systems, as discussed in chapter one.

Financial Problems

I wanted to find out how the students felt about the students felt about student finances. It became clear that the central issues on the students minds were that of student loans and their responses reflected this preoccupation.

P.A: Have you had any financial problems while on the course?

Betty: I don't agree with this loan business, I think it unfair, I am struggling all the time.

Kalwant: The grant is not enough anyway.

Leroy: My parents pay taxes, why should I have to take out a loan?

Sukhbir: I will have to survive as I am, because there is no way I am getting into anymore debt.

Valarie: Money is an important thing, but it will not stop me from completing my degree.

Grace: I am continually overdrawn at the bank, but what can you do, I have no money.

Hazel: I think financial worries are the worst kind of pressures, particularly if you have a family.

Delroy: I hate having debts, particularly when there is no guarantee that you will get a job at the end.

It was clear from the comments of the students that financial problems posed a major obstacle to completion of their degrees, however, these students were also very resilient and would struggle until the bitter end.

Perceptions of Occupational Destinations

P.A: What kind of employment are you hoping to obtain?

Betty: I don't know, there are lots of qualified black people who have not got jobs. They are not treated on merit.

Kalwant: Although qualifications are important, issues of race are more important. I think white graduates will have an advantage.

Leroy: Being black could be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the situation.

Sukhbir: Although I think my colour may effect my employment chances, the fact I have no real work experience could prove to be the major problem.

Valarie: I know it will be hard but I am determined to get the job I want, this degree is just a means to an end.

Grace: Providing I get my degree, I think I will find something to do.....although ideally I would like to go into management.

Hazel: If I can't get a job when I finish, I will try and do some kind of post-graduate course.

Delroy: Racial discrimination is part of life for most black people, but you learn to deal with it.

It was clear from the particularly explicit comments of Kalwant, Leroy, Sukhbir, and Delroy that they did see their colour as a central issue that would effect their future employment opportunities. Valarie, Grace and Hazel's comments pointed to a more subtle acknowledgement of potential occupational barriers.

Seven months after leaving the course I contacted the students again to find out what they were doing. Betty had got a job as an Advice Worker in a community organisation, after applying for 30 jobs and attending 3 interviews. In retrospect, Betty wished she had done a more vocational course, as she stated: *"Because the course is not employer-led it restricts you to certain sectors of employment.....My degree hasn't helped me get a job in the white sector, but it helped me get work in the black sector".*

Kalwant got a job teaching part-time at a local college, after applying for 25 jobs and attending 5 interviews. At the time of speaking to Leroy he was unemployed, but doing voluntary work, and considering applying for Teacher Training. He had applied for 20 jobs and attended two interviews. Leroy's comments are worth mentioning because they closely reflected the perception of Betty. He stated that: *"Although the course showed me different perspectives, it hasn't helped me as much as I thought it would.....to get employment you need experience and professional qualifications which the B.A. didn't give me. In many ways I wish I had done something else, perhaps*

Economics or Environmental Health, something that can lead to a profession, at the end of the day you need work".

At the time of speaking to Sukhbir she was unemployed and had applied for 17 jobs and had not attended any interviews so far. Sukhbir felt that her degree had not created many openings for her. Valarie was also unemployed and had applied for 36 jobs and attended two interviews. She had decided to apply for the CQSW course. Grace had initially got a job as a Training & Development Officer, but had since left that post and was now working free-lance as a Trainer, in the voluntary sector. She felt that her course had given her confidence, but also felt that there should have been a work placement element built into the course. Hazel had applied for 20 jobs and received 5 interviews. She decided to apply for a PGCE. Delroy had applied for 30 jobs and had received 8 interviews. He was currently was working in the theatre on a free-lance basis. His experiences in the labour market led him to comment that: *" Having a degree should have helped my employment prospects,unfortunately I think my colour has been a disadvantage".*

It was clear that on all three courses the black students held particular perceptions about the relationship between their course, their colour and occupational destination. Their experience and treatment on each course helped to shape the way they visualised their respective occupational futures, and in many ways reflected their actual experience of the labour process.

Indeed, the foreboding that was echoed by some of the students in the study, in terms of their likely career prospects, has been supported by empirical research on black graduate destinations. Ballard and Holden (1975) followed a group of 60 black and white graduates in their search for employment. There research showed that black graduates were more likely than their white counterparts to make more applications and yet gain fewer interviews. Ballard and Holden argued that such different experiences could not be explained by sex, social class or degree result. They also found evidence that suggested that black graduates were more likely than white graduates continue in full-time education due to their anticipation of labour market discrimination. Tanna (1987) in her research on South Asian graduates in British Universities found that Asian graduates were systematically being discriminated against during their search for work. As she stated:

> **In a matched sample of South Asians and White British graduates it was found that the former were better qualified, willing to accept a lower minimum salary and had started searching for work earlier. The South Asians had also made more applications for work and although proportionately more of their applications reached first, second and third interview stages, they were less likely than their White British counterparts to be offered employment at each level...Further, it was also evident that higher academic qualifications could not insulate South Asian graduates from discriminatory processes operating in the labour-market (Tanna, 1987: 449).**

Research carried out by Brennan and McGeevor (1990) has echoed the findings of Ballard and Holden (1975) and Tanna, (1987). Interestingly, this more recent research has pointed to the specific importance of courses taken by black students in determining

their employment prospects. Their research indicates that generally Social Science and Humanities graduates face a more difficult task in finding employment than do graduates from areas such as Applied Sciences, Business Studies, Law and Computing. The experiences of Betty and Leroy from the Dip HE course would appear to further validate this finding. In summation of the report Brennan and McGeevor stated that:

> **All ethnic minority graduates face a likelihood of being unemployed after graduation, and they report more difficulty in finding suitable employment..they are unlikely to be unemployed in the long term. But although they are ultimately successful in getting a job, they are less likely than white graduates to be satisfied with it ,...the quality of the job obtained is likely to be inferior to that obtained by a similarly qualified white graduate (Brennan and McGeevor, 1990: 92).**

Chapters Three, Four and Five represent the articulation of black students coming to terms with their location within a higher educational structure. The chapters also represent Part Two of the study, an assessment of the black experience. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight represent Part Three of the study, a construction of an adequate interpretative framework to throw more light on the complex contours of black student experience within white educational structures.

PART THREE: INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 6. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IN WHITE STRUCTURES

In the ethnographic chapters we saw examples of the lived experience of black students studying on three different kinds of courses in higher education. What was noticeable from the students comments was the way in which their various interpretation of their black identities, helped to structure their understanding and perception of their position both within particular courses and the institution in general.

The question that arises is how do we begin to unpack and explain more fully the origins and dynamics of such articulated constructs of black students reality?. The central aim of this chapter is to argue that the precise nature of the struggle entered into by discernible groups of black students in this study, and its procedural outcome may only be adequately explained when located in a framework of what I shall call Black Consciousness.
Michael Mann (1973) has argued that class consciousness can be broken down in to four key elements: (1) Class identity-the definition of oneself as working class; (2) Class opposition- the perception that capitalists and their managers constitute an enduring opponent; (3) Class totality-the realisation that the two previous elements defines one's own social situation in the society that one lives; (4) an alternative society- a conception of the desired alternative which will be realised when class conflict is successfully resolved. Just as there exists consciousness around

class, so too is there consciousness around 'race'. 'Race relations are not easily transferable into class relations. Within the context of this study I will argue than a partially independent form of 'Black Consciousness' exists, that has its own oppositional levels of expression. Black Consciousness aims to produce black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society, but expresses group pride, determination and self-realisation.

This means developing a generic framework that can make sense of the differing black student responses to aspects of their course and an investigation of their common experiences of what it means to black in a predominantly white higher educational structure and how this overshadows aspects of their past, present and future life experiences.

In order to elaborate this concept further it is useful to trace the contributions and limitations of sub-cultural theory which has been applied in recent times to the explanations of specific black student sub-cultures within the context of school and other educational settings.

It will then be my intention to explain the development and conditions of black consciousness by tracing its historically rooted cultural origins, and then evaluate the formation of a specifically grounded black critique of white society which seeks to highlight the forms of oppression faced by black people. The formation of Black Consciousness is linked to past historical struggles of black people as a subordinate group within a particular set of circumstances. It is the process of tying together the ideological

and material strands that give rise to the creation of oppositional consciousness at given times. I will then argue that out of the theoretical framework of Black Consciousness develops a specific institutional orientation that has elements of a partially independent knowledge validation system that I call 'Black Scepticality', that informs black student constructs of educational processes. Black Scepticality operates through a variety of different levels; it is related to personal experience of specific interactions, biography, group identification and institutional ethos. Black Scepticality operates as a specialised body of thought, that is mobilised by black students moving through contemporary white educational structures. Black Scepticality indicates the complex levels of social reality as experienced by black student groupings in educational structures, and in so doing, goes beyond the concept of group 'penetration' as discussed by (Willis, 1977).

I will then outline key elements in my study, focusing on how black student behaviour at institutional and course level draw upon aspects of Black Scepticality in their day to day interaction with white institutions.*

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* The proactive existence of Scepticality was observable in the formation of a black student group logic on the three courses. This is not to say that there was total cohesion between the African-Caribbean and Asian students, indeed tensions were located in chapter four, along with examples of black solidarity. The construction of the group logic on the Dip HE course appeared to revolve around the African-Caribbean students, however, some Asian students did appear to identify quite strongly with this particular group logic and were actively involved in contributions within the group. The crucial point is that the formation of a group dynamic by African-Caribbean and Asian students points the reality of a lived Scepticality which is located in a specifically black geography of the institution. The crystallisation of Black Scepticality in this sense, tells us something about the cultural fabric of the institution itself.

To contextualise my findings, I will then briefly discuss relevant studies in America. In the final assessment a discussion will take place on the role of ideological forms of white institutional provision and how these interplay with Black Scepticality, and argue that Black Consciousness as a framework and Black Scepticality as an attitude and mode of behaviour, broadens our understanding of black students experiences of higher educational settings.

6.1 Black Sub-Cultural Theory- A Critique

The 1970s was an important watershed in the development of a "micro" perspective in the sociology of education. This perspective was heralded as the new sociology of education and was associated with the works of Young, (1971) and Keddie, (1971). The central emphasis was on the content and process of education itself, curriculum, status, and crucially the relationships between teachers and pupils. Out of this kind of research came an interest in the way that class, race and gender are experienced by discernible groups of students in educational institutions. In particular Apple, (1977) Macdonald (1980) and Willis, (1977) have shown the way working class students, black students and young women, react to and sometimes oppose the practices and ideologies that exist in schools. This 'resistance' is seen to highlight the dynamic struggles taking place within social structures, as Williams has observed:

> **It is becoming clear that very different forms of racism and sexism are experienced by different groups in different educational settings....Racism...is a complex phenomenon. Not only does the level of racist abuse or harassment vary in different schools and localities but**

> **teacher stereotyping and the labelling of black children vary according to pupil, age, social class, and the demographic distribution of ethnic minority groups. The responses of black students to these different forms of racism has been shown to result in a range of black male and female identities in different settings (Williams, 1987: 334).**

The existence of such 'black identities' has been given a great deal of prominence by ethnographic studies in educational settings (Fuller, 1982; Brah & Minhas, 1985; Wright, 1987; Mac An Ghaill, 1988). Such research has pointed to the creation of an overwhelmingly strong and positive black identity, which has been particularly highlighted in Mac An Ghaill's 1988 study of African-Caribbean and Asian school sub-cultures. Studies carried out by Fuller, 1980; Wright, 1987; and Chigwada, 1988 have shown the extent to which black students are *conscious* of the combined effects of racism and sexism within society generally and educational structures specifically.

Ethnographic studies that have examined the micro processes of educational settings, have revealed quite clearly that while mechanisms of social and cultural reproduction might be efficient, they are never completely dominant, and that they always meet with elements of opposition in various forms. Hill and Turner (1984) have described a sub-culture as:

> **...a system of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and lifestyles of a social group which is distinct from, but related to the dominant culture of a society..there are a great diversity of such sub-cultures, but the concept has been of most use in sociology in the study of ethnic groups, youth and deviancy (Hill and Turner, 1984: 212).**

Whilst 'resistance' or 'sub-cultural' theory offers a crucial insight into the way that social actors make sense of their educational environment, in terms of creativity, activity and resistance. Particular criticisms have been made about the apparent failure to fully incorporate the wider structural conditions that impinge on the formation of a sub-culture i.e. unemployment, low pay and miseducation (Giddens, 1989). Brake (1980) has argued that it is not clear what the main determinants of as sub-culture are. Brake also argues that the concept of a sub-culture implies the existence of an identifiable dominant culture, however, the fragmentation of contemporary culture makes the identification of such a common or dominant culture problematic. Supporters of sub-cultural theory would nevertheless argue that educational structures such as schools, create a dominant culture in microcosm.

It is noticeable that within more contemporary strands of this ethnographic approach, there has been a tendency to utilise the concept of a specific 'black sub-culture' as an explanatory paradigm for interpreting black student experience. Thus it has been argued that black students in particular situations internalise dominant racist and sexist ideologies and create an independent black sub-culture in response to the array of racist and sexist stereotypes that exist in educational institutions. The creation of a sub-culture can be seen as a creative response to (a) institutional factors; or (b) a response to wider structural factors and ideologies within a particular historical/spacial context; or (c) it can be seen as a response to a set of cultural/domestic experiences within a particular context. Different elements of the above are prioritised by different authors. Mary Fuller's study of

black girls in a London comprehensive school prioritised elements (a) and (c). Mirza (1992) in a critique of the sub-cultural characteristics in Fuller's study, argues that Fuller seems to suggest that reasons for the girls 'isolation' and 'anger', which determine the characteristics of the sub-culture, lie in the low value of domestic work in the home and the girls negative relationships with black peers. Mirza goes on to argue that:

> **Fuller, in emphasising the oppressive nature of the black family, supports the belief that cultural obstructions to fuller participation in society are reproduced within black families by themselves...Such assumptions are clearly the outcome of 'commonsense' pathological ideas about the black family and inappropriate definitions of sexism which have been imposed on the black experience (Mirza, 1992: 22).**

Interesting issues also arise out of Mac an Ghaill's (1988) study of African-Caribbean and Asian sub-cultures in a school and a college. Mac an Ghaill describes the sub-cultural formation of the 'Rasta Heads' and the 'Warriors' as indicators of 'visible' and 'invisible' forms of resistance. He conceptualises these sub-cultures as being a reaction to the way in which the students location in the school is defined according to particular racial stereotypes, i.e. the visibility of the 'Rasta Heads' is seen as a reflection of the way that African- Caribbean students are perceived as troublesome. This is contrasted with the invisibility of the 'Warriors' which is linked to the passive stereotype of Asian students, which Mac an Ghaill challenges.

The thrust of Mac an Ghaill's argument is that the cultural resistance of black students is expressed in behaviour determined

by the dominant ideology and its wider social effects. Thus the students capitalise on racial stereotypes in order to express their opposition, which in turn leads to a further confirmation and reinforcement of the subordination of black students. Mac an Ghaill's central argument is that sub-cultures are related or opposed to a dominant culture and that the dimensions of the opposition in this case are likely to be expressed through racial stereotypes stemming from differing forms of white racism. The problem with Mac an Ghaill's study and other similar research studies is that they try to force black student experience into convenient traditional sub-cultural responses. So in Mac an Ghaill's study, African- Caribbean and Asian boys and girls are over categorised into stances that reflect the 'mainstreamer', the 'compromiser' and the 'rejector'. These typologies tell us little about the historical dimension of black resistance and struggle and how students constructions of 'race' and racism guide their behaviour. They do not identify areas of common experience and awareness across the groups.

Another problem with this kind of sub-cultural explanation is that it takes such things as the speaking of minority languages, being late for lessons and the disruption of lessons as prime indicators of a sub-culture. Such behaviour may point to forms of black student resistance, but not necessarily a sub-culture. The final and most important criticism of this version of sub-cultural theory is that it implicitly renders black student behaviour to the realms of being *only* a reaction to racial stereotypes and white racism. The complexity of the black experience is explained away in terms

of a knee-jerk reaction to externally operating stimuli rooted in some aspect of class reproduction.

Without doubt black sub-cultural theory despite its limitations has added a further contribution to an understanding of the way in which black social groups interact with white educational structures. The best of the black sub-cultural studies emphasise the behavioural and verbal responses to forms of institutional, ideological and strctural oppression. Black Scepticality however, approaches these responses from a different angle. It identifies the common experiences, awareness of black students but also includes a possible shared body of thought giving rise to a particular orientations to white educational institutions. It is an active response which informs the students collective engagement with institutional provision. The processes of group understanding and behaviour are the focus, not just behavioural outcomes. Black student interaction within educational processes are more complex than sub-cultural theories allow for. Black student interaction is more than just a rejection of racial stereotypes and white racism. It is the realisation by black people that in order to compete and survive in white society they have to develop group power and build a firm foundation for this. Being an historically, politically, socially and economically dispossessed group, they have the strongest foundation from which to operate. I believe that the issue of understanding the experiences of black students in white educational structures can better be explained within a framework of 'Black Consciousness' which seeks to locate the historical, spiritual, political and material essence of forms of black resistance within a lived culture. It is from this politically

located perspective of black cultural forms that collective identities are reformulated specifically within an institutional setting to create a partially independent knowledge validation system which I have called Black Scepticality. Black Scepticality as a concept is more flexible than sub-cultural theory because it acknowledges the complicated levels of both personal and group identification with social processes, and does not try to produce regid typications of group behaviour, but rather suggests the existence of a black experiential continuum. Thus my contention is that discernible groups of black students who have to a greater or lesser extent shared similar biographical experiences will through their day to day interactions, revoke and re-work central aspects of 'Black Consciousness' into a mode of interpretation that fits their particular construct of what is *real* and what is *true* within an institutional environment.

While it is clear that there are differences between secondary, further and higher educational structures in terms of organisation and ethos, issues of racism and discrimination are consistent factors that influence black student perceptions and participation within such institutions. The need to go beyond a sub-cultural analysis of black student experience, and develop a more dynamic concept is tangentially evident in the work of Mac An Ghaill when he acknowledges that:

> **There was disagreement among the students about the degree to which their secondary schools were racially structured. This disagreement extended to their perceptions of Casement college. Some of the students, who primarily focused on teacher-student interaction maintained that they had experienced little personal racial antagonism. For others, who took a broader view, including**

> **institutional structures and processes, their schools, as part of wider society, were seen as significant institutions in reproducing racial exclusiveness (Mac An Ghaill, 1988: 276).**

The competing constructions of racism as described by Mac an Ghaill could I believe be a manifestation of a Black Scepticality operating on an attitudinal continuum. However, this particular mode of independent thought has its origins located in a wider historically grounded Black Consciousness. I would argue that the essence of Black Consciousness is linked to past historical struggles of black people as a subordinate group within a particular set of social relations. It is the process of tying together the ideological and material strands that gives rise to the creation of oppositional consciousness. In using the term 'oppositional consciousness', I do not imply that a static monolithic culture of resistance exists, rather I would suggest that Black Consciousness is never fixed once and for all because historical conditions alter the nature of that consciousness as it is lived and experienced by groups of black people. And indeed such a consciousness may at times contain contradictory elements that foster both compliance with and resistance to oppression. The central point is that Black Consciousness in all its historical manifestations creates a cultural reservoir of understanding. Peter Fryer (1984) articulates the importance of Black Consciousness in relation to the black experience of life in Britain when he says that:

> **Throughout the 1970s, as the settlers' children - the second generation'-strove to make sense of the situation they found themselves born into, it was precisely this consciousness, with its rich tradition of militancy, resistance, and struggle, to which they would increasingly turn for guidance. And it was there they would find their strength (Fryer, 1984: 368).**

To begin to further unravel the essence of Black Consciousness it is first necessary to locate its historical origins and determinants and examine the conditions that made its formation viable.

6.2 The Development and Conditions of Black Consciousness

To begin to unpack the dynamics of Black Consciousness, one has to understand the historical experience of a colonised people. This means viewing Black Consciousness as a historical mode of thought that is lived through culture and reproduced in contemporary settings. The forms of Black Consciousness that have existed through history have been varied, and I would not argue that they could be viewed as a never changing set of attitudes and beliefs. However, it is possible to identify a core of beliefs, a specific Black Consciousness which is grounded in a particular assessment of the power relations that exist between black and white groups in society.

One can, I believe see manifestations of a particular value system in the cultures of black people from America, the West-Indies and Asia. In particular, black societies in America and the the West-Indies reflect elements of a core African value system that existed prior to and independent of racial oppression. Moreover, as a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination, black people share a common experience of oppression (Mbiti, 1969). Such similarities in material conditions have fostered shared Afro-centric values that permeate the family structure, religious institutions and

community life in parts of Africa, America and the Caribbean (Collins, 1990). This common experience of oppression and racial subjugation has in black societies created a culture of 'resistance' that has permeated many aspects of black people's lives. Steve Biko speaking of the racial subjugation of black South Africans articulates the conditions that give rise to a Black Consciousness within that context:

> **Briefly defined therefore, Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression-the blackness of their skin-and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them in perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from 'normal' which is white..Black Consciousness..seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life. (Biko, 1978: 63)**

Historically, if one considers the sheer brutality and oppression experienced by the black slave, has helped to create and sustain a language of consciousness and resistance which ultimately had been rooted in the fabric of African and Asian cultures. Knife Abraham in assessing the dialectical influence of the colonial period on the slave stated that:

> **The colonial ideology, which planted the germs of conflict and dissension based on race, creed and colour, was in force de facto and de jure for over three hundred years. Moreover, it was maintained through an aggressive policy which put the economic and political interests of the dominant race at the forefront. The racial and cultural propaganda which was pursued had thus the blessing and backing of the most powerful economic interests in the society which, with the help of their elitist auxiliaries, worked out a fabric of relations of political dominance and economic exploitation. During this process black**

> **people were dumbfounded and humiliated, but the dialectics of protest were not arrested. Despite the odds against them and the grim story of exploitation which continued unimpeded, they had from time to time put up resistance (Abraham, 1991: 105).**

It appears then, that the black slaves understanding of white society was grounded in the basic requirement to survive physically and mentally the oppression of the slave master. Price, (1973) gives the example of the Maroon communities who put up stiff resistance to slavery in the Americas, he argues that such communities stood out as an heroic challenge to white authority and as living proof of the existence of a slave consciousness that refused to be limited by the white's conception or manipulation of it.

The slaves were also involved in more subtle forms of resistance, such as stealing from the master, such activities were not merely amoral acts, but a necessary means of supplementing an inadequate diet. Underlying such activities was a very important code. For example Kenneth Stampp argues that there existed a slave code and the masters code on the subject of stealing. From the slaves point of view 'stealing' from the master was not stealing but 'taking'; taking (the master's) meat out of one tub, and putting it in another. Whereas 'stealing' meant appropriating something that belonged to another slave, and this was an offence (Stampp, 1956).

However, it should not be thought that a Black Consciousness was brought about solely through the imposition of slavery. Rather one should understand that these African traditions went through a

period of transformation that enabled old ways to be adapted to new circumstances within the colonial period. A point that Lawrence highlights when he argues that:

> **There is, however, ample evidence....to suggest that the slaves did indeed retain elements of their 'old cultural conditions' and that these formed the basis for the re-creation of their culture. The prevalence of secret 'praise meetings' all over the south....These meetings in which knowledge of voodoo, insurrection and 'the underground railway' were shared, were feared by some of the 'masters' and repeatedly outlawed by the authorities. It was in these meetings that plans for revolt and escape were hitched and the slaves went to great lengths to avoid detection, meeting in out of the way places, posting look-outs....Where the slaves adopted elements of European cultures, they did so on their own terms, in the light of their own concerns and circumstances. This process was also mediated by elements of African cultures which had been retained and reworked in the initial period of slavery (Lawrence, 1982: 106).**

Lawrence goes on to argue that the resultant transformation led to the creation of something that was neither European or African in any pure sense, but significantly it was still rooted in African cultural forms and which later developed into a distinctive Afro-American culture.

In the same way it should be noted that the survival of elements of African culture are entwined in the cultures of people from the West-Indies. The specific form of Black Consciousness was translated into regular slave rebellions that took place throughout the Caribbean. An example of such a rebellion, in Barbados, is cited by Robinson (1983) when argued that:

> **The rebellion broke out out with shocking suddenness on Easter Sunday night, 14 April 1816, at a time when the slaves were free from work and had ample opportunities for organization**

> under cover of the permitted festivities. Cane field and can-trash houses were fired as beacons in the south -east parishes, particularly St. Philip, one of the driest areas, with the highest ratio of slaves to whites. Up to seventy estates were affected... Only 2 whites were killed in the fighting but probably about 100 slaves, with a further 144 executed, 170 deported, and innumerable floggings. Roaming slaves were shot on sight and Negro houses burned...Convicted rebels were publicly executed in different parts of the island and their bodies -sometimes just their heads- in many cases exposed on their home estates (Robinson, 1983: 213).

The argument being advanced here is that the brutality imposed by white colonialism on black people has helped to create firstly a consciousness around black unity and communality, in the face of extreme exploitation and secondly this consciousness was expressed through various forms of cultural codes of resistance, from 'stealing' to open rebellions. There is documented evidence to suggest that slaves were able to organise themselves into military style regiments during their insurrection, a point supported by Reckford who described the situation in Jamaica where:

> The rebels' military core was the Black regiment, about one hundred and fifty strong with fifty guns among them....The Black Regiment then carried rebellions into the hills, invading estates and inviting recruits, burning properties on the border of St. James and stetting off a trail of fires throughout the Great River Valley in Westmoreland and St. Elizabeth (Robinson, 1983 :219).

The Asian experience of White colonisation has similarities with that of Africa, the Americas and the West-Indies, in that the Europeans wanted to exploit and subjugate the will and culture of the host inhabitants. The British for example instigated legal and

institutional changes in the land and revenue systems in India which had the knock on effect of taking away land from the peasantry. Iftikar Ahmed has suggested that it was these changes that precipitated the 1857 rebellion. In assessing the importance of this rebellion Walvin states that:

> **The Indian uprising of 1857 came close to overthrowing the tenuous British hold over India. There were, after all, only 45,22 European troops in that massive empire. The fighting, which lasted for fourteen months, was savage and quickly took on a racial quality. It became widely accepted by Hindus and Muslims that the British intended to convert everyone to Christianity....It became part of that drive to change subject peoples, part of that 'moral and intellectual advancement of the people' that they should be obliged to cast off the 'superstitions' and customs of their indigenous religions and turn to the civilizing habits of Christianity...Of course there were numerous other objections to British policies in India- to the educational, economic and land reforms- all of which exploded into violence in the mutiny (Walvin, 1984: 44).**

I would not try to argue that the exact same form of Black Consciousness that informed rebellions in the Americas and the West-Indies was present in India, but I would suggest that racial oppression was resisted by Asian people reaching into their cultures and traditions and utilising them to inform their struggles against imperialist domination. This central point of analysis is succinctly expressed by Bourne and Sivanandan (1980) in their discussion of contemporary forms of black resistance, when they argues that:

> **West-Indian cultures are, by the very nature of their slave and plantation histories, anti-racist and anti-capitalist. If you have been bought and sold, lynched and raped and oppressed and exploited, just because of your race, it is not hard to make the connection between racism and exploitation. And it is this consciousness of that**

> connection, whether among West-Indians or Asians and however arrived at (through slave or peasant exploitation), that makes for political struggles across race lines (Sivanandan and Bourne, 1980: 345).

It is this historically grounded Black Consciousness that is essentially reworked within black communities and indeed upon as part of a cultural fabric to make sense of and penetrate the symbolic mythologies of white society and white institutions. Elements of this counter-hegemonic form of consciousness have been visible in such black socio-political movements as Garvyism, Pan-Africanism and Rastafarianism which have all emphasised the need for black autonomy and universal brotherhood. It is the combination of these socially and politically grounded traditions that have helped to sustain Black Consciousness. Aspects of this Black Consciousness are described by Hall (1978) in his analysis of early black settlement in Britain during the fifties and sixties, when he states:

> In another sense, the foundation of colony society meant the growth of internal cultural cohesiveness and cultural solidarity within the ranks of the black population inside the corporate boundaries of the ghetto: the winning away of cultural space in which an alternative black social life could flourish. The internal colonies thus provided the material base for this cultural revival: first, of a 'West-Indian consciousness', no longer simply kept alive in the head or memory, but visual on the streets; second (in the wake of the black American rebellions), of a powerful and regenerated 'black consciousness' (Hall et al, 1978: 351).

The growth of the 'internal colonies' is linked to the state's manipulation of immigration policies of the 1950s and 60s where moral panics were created about the number of black citizens resident in Britain. Thus the racial oppression experienced by

black citizens and their families post-1945 reproduced a new cultural framework that informed their consciousness of 'race'. The central point being articulated here is that Black Consciousness becomes a framework, particularly for black students to negotiate and critically evaluate the ethos, culture and pedagogy of higher educational settings. When black students enter educational settings, they bring with them a specific cultural 'baggage' that helps to trans-fix their perceived place and value within the institution. However, the way in which particular black student groups interpret and act on this consciousness may not be totally uniform. Rather it should be understood as occupying a particular position on a fluid continuum, which develops and fluctuates in the light of past and present interactions and locations. Operating within the framework of Black Consciousness, is a specific mode of thought a position of 'Black Scepticality' which critically assesses the legitimacy of societal and institutional 'knowledge claims' in the light of ones own lived reality. The significance of Black Scepticality is that in its various manifestations it can demonstrate an independently specialised structure of knowledge that can encourage both individual and collective identity that impels black students to utilise more fully their own self knowledge. Moreover, it is an unmasking of eurocentric and racist ideologies that are ingrained in white educational processes.

6.3 The Language and Logic of Black Scepticality

In his book entitled Learning to Labour (1977) Willis, writing within a cultural reproductionist framework, showed the way in which white lads in an educational setting created an oppositional

'counter-school' culture which in some instances threatened the ideological reproductive function and legitimacy of the school. More importantly Willis pointed to the power of the 'counter-school' culture to penetrate and expose the myth of a meritocracy and to unmask the real relationship between education, training and labour in a capitalist system. As he stated:

> **These cultural penetrations are, I would argue of something real. There form is of direct cultural activity and immediacy but they expose more than they know. In the first place there is a common educational fallacy that opportunities can be made by education, that upward mobility is basically a matter of individual push, that qualifications make their own openings. Part of the social democratic belief in education even seems to be that the aggregate of all these opportunities created by the upward push of education actually transforms the possibilities for all the working class, and so challenges the class structure itself (Willis, 1977: 127).**

However, as far as Willis is concerned, this particular cultural penetration is only partially successful because the 'lads' in his study ultimately take on particular values associated with manual labour, in short they are reproduced in the image of their fathers. From within this perspective, 'penetration' offers a way of conceptualising the potential of 'cultural insight' and the inherent limitations of it.

My notion of Black Scepticality share certain characteristics with Willis's notion of 'Penetration', particularly the view of a distinctive set of beliefs about a section of the oppressed group having the capacity to probe and question many of the taken for granted beliefs about the role of certain institutions in society. However, as I have been arguing throughout this chapter, the

black experience, due to its historically different cultural origins, is not the same as the 'white experience'. Black people's perception of reality are shaped by the structural interplay of various forms of racial oppression and class inequality.

Thus Black Scepticality is not limited in the same way as 'penetrations' because its analysis is historically grounded and is forever being reworked in black communities through the day to day material existence of being black in essentially a white society. Black students then, essentially come from a different location from white students, white cultural institutions are intersected by class and gender divisions, but they are also overlaid by the cultural fabric of 'Englishness' and 'Whiteness', which both working class and middle class white students can automatically feel some kind of affinity with at different levels, and can buy into. Black student experience of, and relationship with educational institutions in Britain, cannot be divorced from the wider black experience of racial oppression, stigmatisation and discrimination, as Carby points out:

> **....the material interests of black students and the structure of social relationships, in which these interests are embedded, are distinct from those of white students....we cannot view the struggles of black students in schools as struggles of school only. These forms of resistance must be understood within the wider context of the struggles of the whole black community. Black struggles over educational processes and practices have occurred automatically, outside of formal mechanisms of representation..the social-democratic rally cry of 'equality of opportunity' became demonstrably bankrupt (Carby, 1982: 184).**

The central point being articulated here is that there is a need to reconceptualise the experiences of black students moving through educational spaces. This involves locating black student activities in the specific articulation of Black Scepticality, the formulation of a critical stance. Black Scepticality operates through a variety of levels, it is related to one's personal biography, group identification, and institutional ethos. While it is true that each individual has a unique biography, made up of concrete experiences, values and motivations it is also true that such experiences contribute to a cultural context where ideas are shared by members of the group which in turn can give new meanings to ones personal biography. It is in this realm that we must locate black student Scepticality as a specialised body of independent thought, that is mobilised in modern white institutional structures. Mannheim (1936) makes a relevant point about the importance of group constructs of reality when he argues that:

> **If one were to trace in detail...the origin and diffusion of a certain thought-model, one would discover the...affinity it has to the social position of given groups and their manner of interpeting the world Manheim, 1936: 276).**

Thus it is through the vehicle of black student Scepticality that one can begin to unpack black student meaning systems and the way they affect white educational structures.

6.4 The Case Studies-Revisted

Dip HE

Of all the three groups of black students interviewed, it was the Dip HE students who appeared to outwardly demonstrate most clearly aspects of Black Scepticality. The majority of these students had very negative experiences of schooling which in some way may have influenced the way they saw the institution and its programmes of study. They were openly critical of aspects of their course particularly in relation to the subjects that they studied, Hazel's comments were indicative of this view:

> ***I think the subjects could have been allot better. I did Sociology and Philosophy, I did feel that issues of race were not tackled properly it was skimmed. I think its the way lecturers are, there is not allot of understanding. I don't know, its hard, you can't make them understand the way you feel as a person and your experience.***

It was noticeable with the Dip HE students that their 'race' and racial equality issues appeared to be a central construction of their lived experience, and this concern in turn led them to search for and demand more black knowledge validation in terms of the curriculum, as the comments of Kalwant and Grace illustrate:

> ***I cannot relate to High Art, its just not me. I tend to explore issues concerned with black people. I feel English heritage doesn't belong to me.***

> ***To be frank I do not consider anti-racist initiatives taken by the Polytechnic to be anything more than a polite gesture to black students as a whole. Race issues are often discussed as nothing more than another social issue within certain subjects. Steps have to be taken apart from a few statements from the Poly, which have been ineffective in terms of lecturers attitudes in the classroom and marking of assignments. I think race issues need to be a compulsory part of all module choices available to students, and not just an option. In this way it can be dealt with at all levels within the polytechnic and not shunned as a radical arena for debate.***

Grace's comments were particularly interesting because they touched upon the important issues of policy and institutional

commitment to racial equality. Many of the Dip HE students felt that the presentation of much of the subject matter did not incorporate their experiences of race and racism. Furthermore they were also critical of the lack of black lecturers in the institution generally and on their course specifically and these concerns were translated into comments like Valarie's, when she said:

> ***I tend to be dubious of white lecturers because they are not black. I tend to be sceptical. How can they know ?. Their not black. If a black person was teaching me I would feel differently.***

It was evident from my interviews and observations with that this issue in particular ran very deep with some of the students. It was also the case that some students went out of their way to find black book shops so as to counteract what they saw to be an essentially eurocentric curriculum. The somewhat 'hidden' nature of the evaluation process in much of the curriculum in higher education allows undefined taken for granted assumptions about 'cultural skills' discursive styles and linguistic background' to be almost presented as 'neutral'. It is in this site of perception, definition and understanding that some black student groupings question the legitimacy ingrained in those assumptions.

It appeared that these students were looking for a black perspective that firstly validated their own experiences and secondly, created an historical context in which African-Caribbean and Asian Societies were shown in more positive contexts, so they could retrace their linked but separate consciousness, 're-discovered ' in the present, but rooted in the

past. In speaking of the British education system and its effects on the black student Amon Saba Saakana argues that:

> **...Education was planned to instil into the black student a crisis of personality: to perpetuate the myth that Afrika had no meaningful history before the European *discovered* him. This deliberately inculcated false consciousness produces in the black student a deep-seated feeling of inferiority and helplessness, and a psychological dependence on the western parade of 'superior' history and education. But education, to paraphrase Maxine Green, is nothing but the attempt to make sense of one's own life-world. This implies that for black students there is a specific approach to education which has to do with unraveling his/her situation in the world of the British educational system and his/her role in it. To be conscious of this need is to be politicised (Saba Saakana, 1986: 121).**

What was also interesting about the Dip HE students was that while they valued the fact they were on the road to a degree and certification, some of them did not construe that process as gaining real knowledge. It was perceived as 'Whiteman's knowledge', which often was at great variance with their own everyday realities. This point was illustrated in a group discussion with some black Dip HE students in the canteen, when I asked what they thought of the subjects they were studying. Vicky, a female student replied: ***"I don't really believe you gain knowledge here, I already have my own reasoning".*** When I asked her to explain further she said learning all that theoretical stuff is all well and good, but at the end of the day you have got to get back to reality and survive as a black person. Vicky's comment was quite revealing because it pointed to the ways that other students who I had interviewed were able to distance themselves from elements of their work.

On the face of it these students responses may seem contradictory, Why would they enter HE if they believed it had little offer them ?. The answer perhaps lies in the belief that education may in the abstract offer a valuable route out of socio-economic disadvantage even if ones lived experience says something different. It is here that we must realise that a black sceptical construct is entwined with a certain degree of instrumentalism. It is possible to 'play the game' without accepting the legitimacy and context of the game. For some Dip HE students this meant almost taking on a new identity, creating another 'self ', this point was highlighted in my individual tape recorded interview with Neil, a former Dip HE student who said:

> ***To some extent you take on an academic guise, because you start using words you never used before. I feel while you are at poly you have to do it, I feel it is necessary.....You have to learn to do that, its a must... I don't think it disappears, you call on it when you need it if you're going for a job interview..... If you want to impress you must use middle class language. You use it in particular contexts. I know it sounds calculating but I think you need to do it and its helpful.***

Clearly not all Dip HE students will express this process in the same way, Neil had identified and modified what he saw as 'middle class language', with the view to make his passage through the institution and into employment as smooth as possible. Neil's comments also draw our attention to the complex interplay of race, class and culture as lived through by black students.

It was interesting to note that the Dip HE students appeared to be critically aware of racist incidents that it some circumstances

happened to them personally. Particularly the experiences of Betty and Leroy indicated this:

> ***The Accommodation person for the Halls of Residence didn't want to give me a flat. But she offered it to white students. I realised the person was racist, she could defend her actions. It would be your word against hers.***
>
> ***When I lived with white students, the first time I came into the kitchen they all went silent. Later on they told me that they thought I had come to rob the place, they didn't think I was a student.***

Racism does not always manifest itself in the overt 'Alf Garnett' manner, much of the time it is subtle it is the glance, it is the unsaid and it is these kind of experiences that black students often have to develop strategies to deal with.

One of the key findings that came out of my interviews with the Dip HE students was the way in which they formed their own informal support mechanism within the institution. It appeared that there combined histories and experiences became synthesized into a proactive educational and cultural network as Betty's comments illustrated:

> ***People will help you with books ect. In the first year we worked as team. This brings you into contact with other blacks and from that a relationship is formed.***

It was noticeable that this group dynamic operated both inside and outside the classroom and there was a tendency for other black students to move towards the group, as Leroy observed:

> ***Although we sat together in collectively in groups we didn't know each other, but we all sat together. It was an unconscious thing.***

It became clear that the group had a variety of educational and political functions, it was the arena where black students had their own space to work through problems they were encountering with the institution and to talk generally. Hazel's comments clearly articulated the educational and political concerns that structured the groups dynamics:

> ***It gives you a sense of security, it motivates you to discuss things and deal with it. It gives you mutual support and counselling. The moral support means that you have got to get through for yourselves and for black people generally. We are in a white institution, we have encourage each other to be proud. We are role models.***

The informal discussions that took place in the social spaces of the institution were crucial for these particular black students because on a deeper level their knowledge claims continually cemented the connectedness of their perceived situation. The use of dialogue in this context could in some ways bee seen as reflecting fragments of a communal African-based oral tradition that is found in both African-American and African-Caribbean cultures (Saakana and Pearse, 1986). Black discourse structures require the spontaneous verbal and non verbal interaction between speaker and listener, which is part of an alternative epistemology, which June Jordan (1985) refers to as "Black English". Jordan, speaking about the political nature of black american discourse makes a significant point that:

> **Our language is a system constructed by people constantly needing to insist that we exist....our language devolves from a culture that abhors all abstraction, or anything tending to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and now/the truth of the person who is speaking or listening. Consequently, there is no passive voice construction possible in Black English; For example, you cannot say, "Black English is being**

> **eliminated." You must say, instead, 'white people eliminating Black English.' The assumption of the presence of life governs all Black English...every sentence assumes the living and active participation of at least two human beings, the speaker and listener (Jordan, 1985: 129).**

It can be argued that black student group dynamics in my study, at a profound level, rearticulates aspects of 'Black English'. It was also evident that the formation of the group dynamic had been observed and commented upon by white students as Valarie recalled: ***"They ask you why do you black students go around in groups ?"***. The creation of this group dynamic was partly due to the fact that these black students did see themselves as being in a minority, although there were more black students on Dip HE than on other courses. Their shared perception of their position within the institution and a conscious affirmation of their blackness led them into viewing the particular practices of the institution from a critical cultural location.

It was clear that these Dip HE students were politicised and wanted to see a more rigourous black perspective in many of their subjects on their course, their demands at another level exposed the limitations of the liberal ethos that Dip HE course tried to convey. The relative flexibility of the courses entry requirements, its success in attracting non-traditional student groupings, and its student-centred ethos meant perhaps that black students were given more scope to question what was on offer and what areas of the course were legitimate. The numerical strength of the black students on the course and the characteristics of Dip HE appeared to create institutional conditions which was conducive to the further development of a Black Scepticality.

HNC, Black Construction Workers

The Black construction students on the whole, appeared to share aspects of the negative experiences of schooling that the Dip HE students had articulated. However, the construction students criticisms of subjects on their course was not related to any notion of black validation or representation within subject matter. Their main criticisms for some of the students, focused on the way particular subjects were delivered, a point highlighted by Basil and Julie:

> ***I don't understand the BTEC and HNC subjects.***
>
> ***They are a bit hard, I don't think in practical terms. I like theory. This course involves allot of problem solving and lots of research. Its like trying to find a needle in a haystack.***

For these students, their 'race' did not appear to be an organising principle in the same way as it had been for the Dip HE students in terms of their assessment of the curriculum. However, when I asked them about being on a black only course, there appeared to be disagreement about the wright and wrongs of having such a course. The majority of students appeared to agree that the course was a good thing, they saw it in terms of being a benign opportunity for black people to enter the arena of construction. But two students, Balbir and Joseph, showed conflicting emotions of being on the course:

> ***Personally its great, there is comradeship, enthusiasm and unity. But I also think that such a course is insulting. As it suggests that black people cannot get into polytechnic normally. Lecturers in other departments think this course is useless, but its turned out to be good. I would support the course, its been devised well.***

> ***Why is this called a 'special course', its like 'special schools' for the dunces. Its like we are problem cases. Its saying we are not capable of going into the run of things. The cause behind it may be good and it has got good points but its like you are an invalid or you have got something wrong with you. We are being categorised and I don't like it.***

The comments made by Balbir and Joseph don't just reflect individualised predicaments, for on a deeper level they go straight to the heart of ideological and philosophical 'problems' around the issue of 'specialist provision' for black people, and the role of 'positive action' programmes in bringing about racial justice.

From my interviews with the construction students it appeared that they got on quite well together. One may have assumed that this would have been the case as it was a black only course any way. However, in comparison with the Dip HE students there did did not appear to be the same intensity of group solidarity. I did not detect the same practical manifestations of the black dynamic, although this could have been due to differences in terms of cultural mix of students in the sample.

Another important theme that came out my research with the black construction students was the extent to which many of them felt isolated both inside and outside the classroom setting and how they related this to their race. The comments of Baljit particularly suggested this:

> ***.....We used to sit in with the degree students on Thursdays, there was only one black person on the degree. Both groups sat separately...Other students don't want to mix with us because we are all black. Other than our own group, nobody wants to talk to us.***

On the whole, the construction students appeared to have a good relationship with members of staff and were far less critical than the Dip HE students.

The majority of students claimed that they had not encountered any incidents of racism while on their course, however, Baljit and Julie felt that they had been discriminated against in different settings:

> ***Yes, the Head of Resources, all the time he asks you, 'are you construction ?'. He should know, he is a right pain in the neck. He turned off the printer at the mains when I was using it. He has got an attitude problem.***
>
> ***I worked for the council in the Civic Centre, the guys I worked with were plain rude, just because I was a black female..***

For these two students their race became an organising principle in interpreting a particular situation. For the majority of these construction students their perception of racial interaction was not grounded in the same location as the Dip HE students, they were aware of being black and being on a black only course, but their blackness was not central to how they interacted on their course.

The vocational aspects of the course clearly meant that 'race equality' issues in terms the curriculum virtually became redundant as most of their subjects were technical and would not easily relate to multicultural or ant-racist issues. Also it was the case that the students were small numerically, which may have added to their isolation. This meant that a full-blown black dynamic could not be developed in the same way as on Dip HE. The course also echoed the contradictions of a clash of competing

philosophies, emanating from the reconstruction of a 'positive action' programme, within a market oriented framework. Such characteristics at one level served to confuse and fragment the total development of a black scepticism. The irony that stems from this is that a 'black only' course may not necessarily produce the total conditions of Black Consciousness.

BEd Black Student Teachers

Overall, the Black teachers experiences of schooling appeared to be quite positive, in comparison to the Dip HE and Construction students, with only two students Carol and Brenda reporting racist incidents. I also found that out of the seven black student teachers, only three remembered having any black teachers in school and college.

In terms of the subjects studied some the black student teachers criticisms were informed by what they saw as the technical failure of the teaching staff to deliver stimulating lectures as the comments of Carol and Joyce indicated:

> ***I thought it [lecture in Education] was rather repetitive, we have to devise these teaching ideas and you get an example and you get into your little groups and you come up with another idea and you go around and see what everybody has come up with and then you get a handout..After second teaching practice allot of us felt there was no point in coming back because we could have done the rest by correspondence.***

> ***I like the subjects, its not the subjects that's the problem. It tends to be the way the lectures are given. Its like the lecturers have got a standard routine and if you slightly disagree you are in trouble.....You can't veer off the straight and narrow, you get pulled back in..there is allot of disappointment because of the course content. It looks good on paper.....but you are never specifically told what they expect from you, you have to find out the hard way.***

Other students in the group seemed quite satisfied with their subjects. It was interesting that the initial responses of the black student teachers showed some similarities with those of the construction students on this matter. However, once the debate moved on to course content in terms of multicultural and anti-racism the student teachers became more critical, Carol and Joyce stated that:

> ***First of all I haven't been lectured by any Afro-Caribbeans or Asian lecturers. They have all been white. If you're going to be multi-ethnic you really need to have some multi-ethnic teaching staff..There wasn't a lesson where you deliberately had to analyse material. That would have been constructive, then you could say that this or that could be conceived as racist or sexist.***

> ***The Afro-Caribbean experience no, full stop. I am doing Religious Studies that's my main subject and you don't do anything that comes under Afro-Caribbean at all...we have done Hindu religion and Sikhism..I think you have got to do mini modules on new religions, on new aspects. You have got to include some of them because that is what the children are experiencing, and you're going to get into that classroom and your not going to be able to relate to them fully.***

It was interesting that Carol and Joyce both picked upon the employment of black staff as being central to a multicultural perspective. This point had also been articulated by the Dip HE students. It was clear from the comments of the other black student teachers that they too were aware of black curicula issues and concerns.

It appeared that none of the black student teachers had encountered any incidents that they would have labelled as being racist. Although Joyce felt that she had experienced and observed sexism as she stated:

> *.....With some of the lecturers they don't mind if you leave early, but its usually the women who don't mind because you have got to back for your children. One male lecturer in particular asked me why I couldn't leave my child with a neighbour, and he made one of the students cry because she had to take her child to the hospital.*

We are reminded here of the way that gender inequalities also permeate educational settings and also the way race and gender in certain contexts can impinge on each other.

It was clear from the comments of the black student teachers that their levels of black student group solidarity was very low and did not appear to have the intensity of the Dip HE students or the black construction students, the comments of Bertha, Carol and Emelda indicated this:

> *In psychology there are some black people. But on campus all my friends are white. Psychology is a big lecture so you don't really get in contact with other students. I play netball and there are a few black girls in the team, but that's it really.*

> *We [black students] see each other around and we chat at lunch times, but we don't actually get together and do anything as such.*

> *There are a few (black students) yes. The thing is that we really don't come into contact. It all depends on the subject that you are doing. In my particular year I am the only black person doing P.E.*

In many ways their experiences reflected that of the construction students in terms of their apparent isolation due to the very small numbers of black student teachers on courses at the institution. In terms of individual isolation, Emelda's comments on her first impression of the polytechnic are interesting because it shows how self-conscious some black students are made to feel when they are in a minority of one:

.....The more I was looking around the more I was the only black person there. Literally that's it really. I did feel a bit secluded. Yes I do feel as if I am on my own yeah, because I think if you have got somebody who is really say black and they are there with you on the course then you tend to feel more secure don't you ?.

It was important for me to find out to what extent these students saw themselves as black role models in light of the call by government and black pressure groups for black teachers. The student comments pointed to a degree of uncertainty about how they saw themselves as Carol and Joyce stated:

People have said this(being a black role model) but its a bit pretentious isn't it. I am just another person, if you want to put it like that yes I am a role model but its not something you think about. I suppose it good for my children.

.....I want to see myself ideally as someone who is training to be a teacher but I went into school and one of the pupils asked me how come I could speak English. I was stunned for words, so I thought well obviously I have got to be a black teacher to them So that's something I can't hide or change, so perhaps I should be changing my approach.

The majority of black student teachers had found it problematic to identify themselves with the idea of being a black role model. This was in stark contrast to the Dip HE students who believed firmly that they were part of a black cause. For these black student teachers they were aware of race and race equality issues, and indeed put forward critical observations of the limitations of aspects of their subjects, however, their race was not perceived as an organising principle to the same extent as the Dip HE students, rather it appeared closer to the construction workers formulation of Black Scepticality.

The black student teacher's discussion of black only Access Courses was interesting, because it shared certain parallels with the arguments that had been brought up by Balbir and Joseph on the construction course. All the black student teachers were against black only Access Courses into teaching, Carol and Joyce explained why:

> ***I think black Access Courses encourages segregation kind of thing. I prefer it to be more multicultural.***
>
> ***I did an Access Course at Dudley and there was an option to do the Access Course for ethnic minorities who wanted to go into teaching and I stayed on the ordinary Access Course. I thought the black course was going too far the other way.....to me, if you want to be a teacher you should get your education regardless of whether you are black or white. They shouldn't need an Access Course for ethnic minorities, normal Access Courses should incorporate that in it. That's why I didn't go on it.....what's so special about me that I should go on that course ?. You get pigeon holed as a black person.***

Again we have the situation of black students confronting the thorny issue of 'special provision' for black people. Both Balbir, Carol and Joyce on one level shared a critical perception of black only courses, but there stances were differentiated by the fact that Balbir and Joseph were speaking from a position of living through the contradictions of being on such a course. Whereas that material reality was not part of the black student teachers location, on this point they were so near, but so far from each others position on a continuum.

It was clear that that black student teachers did not exhibit the same kind of Black Scepiticality as the Dip HE students. I would suggest that this was in part due to the course, i.e. the narrower vocational, non- challenging nature of aspects of teacher

education programmes. This would be in contrast perhaps to the wider and relatively more critical scope of the social sciences. However, it was the case that these students did show in certain contexts that they shared a generic Black Consciousness, there location therefore was not better or worse than the other students it simply was different.

At this juncture it is important to note that in some ways the black student teachers and black construction workers course were similar, in that both had a predestined vocational outcome, they led directly into career. This could not be said of the Dip HE and the Social Science degree course, here there was no clear cut career pathway. This raises an important question about the relationship between Black Scepticality and specific course outcome in terms of student destinations. In the case of the construction students the amount of Scepticality appeared to intensify once they had left the course and were having to make their way in the labour-market. One of the major selling points of the construction course had been its linkage to specific careers in the building field, while the students may have accepted this particular view, they were also aware of their position as black students competing in a predominantly white sector of the labour -force. Thus in many ways the need for further credentials was given impetus by this Scepticality.

The black student teachers through their perceptions of the future showed a more overt dimension of Black Scepticality. They knew that racism and discrimination were consistent factors that they most likely would have to face at some point. Their location on

this point was very similar to the Dip HE students who perceived barriers to their employment at the end of the course. For all three groups of students exhibited various forms of Black Scepticality, that informed their understanding of the dialectical interplay of race, educational credentials and the labour-market, they in their own ways *know* that the 'rules of the game' would be very different for them.

6.5 Other Relevant Studies

It is clear from my own ethnographic study that black student behaviour in particular educational settings are firstly, informed by culturally grounded framework of Black Consciousness and that secondly, out of this Consciousness emerges a Black Scepticality that is understood and articulated by different groups of black students occupying a range of standpoints on a Black experiential axis.

It is useful to contextualise my own research through the comparative analysis of other relevant research. This means drawing upon studies that have been conducted in America on the experiences of black students in educational settings. The use of the American experience is important because it shares a similar colonial past. In both Britain and America white exclusionary practices have operated, and systematic racial discrimination has been an important factor influencing the concentration of black people in the most disadvantaged sections of society (Myrdal, 1944; Daniel, 1968; Smith, 1977; Steinberg, 1981).

Both countries have many many people who hold ethnocentric views as to who qualifies as full members of the country and community, socially and politically, and these views have often become enshrined in institutional forms. Particularly in immigration legislation (Foot, 1965; Moore and Wallace, 1975; Solomos, 1989). Stephen Small has argued that:

> **Access to each country has consistently been predicated on the notion that each is a 'Whiteman's country'....That is, 'ethnocentrism', 'racism', notions of insiders/outsiders and of 'the other', have all been served to indicate who is to be included and excluded in full citizenship rights. So despite lofty ideals of freedom, equality, democracy and fairness, both countries have systematically excluded a significant proportion of their populations from the benefits of such ideals, and there has consistently been a gap between law and practice. Thus one might also conclude that the American dilemma is, and has for a long time been, the British dilemma (Small, 1991: 9).**

The two American Studies that I will examine are Educated in Romance- Women, Achievement and College Culture (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990) and Minority Education and Caste (John Ogbu, 1978).

The book, Educated in Romance traces the lives of 23 women from 1979 to 1987, from their entry into two southern universities, one that was historically black, the other white. The authors wanted to find out why two-thirds of women abandon their careers or subordinate them to those of their husbands. Their final analysis led them to conclude that a 'culture of romance' existed on the college campus and that this was created and sustained by a pressurised peer system which placed great emphasis on women being seen as attractive to men. Holland and Eisenhart stated that:

> As we followed the women's experiences during the period of our study, we found that a peer system propelled the women into a world of romance in which their attractiveness to men counted most. The women were subjected to a 'sexual auction block..None of the women in the study participated in rebellious counter-culture groups that opposed gender structure...they had critiques-some quite radical-of the consequences of the gender hierarchy...they were actively engaged with those internal divisions and factions within the peer community that struggled over competing constructions of feminine and masculine attractiveness (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990: 8).

The point raised by Holland and Esienhart is crucial, for they suggest 'resistance' does not always take the form of a 'sub-culture' or 'counter-culture', that 'resistance' in terms of race and gender may be more subtle and demonstrate itself in complex ways. So just as there are 'competing constructions' of femininity and masculinity, so too are there different positions of 'Black Scepiticality'.

Significantly, Holland & Esienhart began to unearth differences between the way black and white female students viewed their position within the two universities, as they observed:

> Going back through the ethnographic interviews and observations-which were complete by the time we were analysing the results of the survey-we began to realize that Bradford women had an overall view of the university that differed from the view that the white SU students had. In terms of its relevance to careers, the Bradford women tended to see the university as providing a necessary credential, but not necessarily a relevant education. Getting through was trial, and not necessarily an edifying one, that had to be gotton over..They had the suspicion that school-the institution in general- was likely to be unfair to black students and somewhat irrelevant to their interests and concerns...The (white) SU women were much likely to accept the university

> as a legitimate gatekeeper to future careers and to believe that their school-work was meaningful beyond enabling them to get a degree (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990: 16).

Holland and Esienhart described the black students perception of the institution as 'getting over', in that the students saw the work and requirements of the institution as somewhat arbitrary tasks and procedures that had to be followed in order to reach the desired end of getting a degree and a job, as they importantly point out:

> The women at Bradford who adopted the 'getting over' interpretation all recognised that going to class, buying books, studying, taking tests, and writing papers-however the requirements were defined by the school or by individual instructors-had to be done. But one could 'get over' or get through, without competing all the tasks individually or fully. Some students 'traded up notes' meaning that one student took notes for another who for whatever reason decided not to attend class...Some students shared books, and some brought papers that they turned in as their own work (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990: 171).

The strategies of the black students described by Holland and Esienhart appear to show some similarities with the Dip HE students. Both groups of students had developed a particular stance in relation to the institution. Holland and Esienhart make the extremely interesting observation that:

> ...Although we do not know when in their student careers the 'getting over' interpretation first developed, the women having that interpretation appeared to have brought it with them to college. Their life-history interviews made it clear that they held a 'getting;' over interpretation of high-school work too. They may have had to work harder in college, but their college experiences apparently did not challenge them to revise their view of what school work was about (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990: 178).

This view according to the authors was in stark contrast to that of the white females at the other university, whose perception had initially been positive. Holland and Esienhart described this orientation as the 'doing well' interpretation. However, as they progressed through the institution they became discouraged by their experiences within the institution, and began to question their commitment to hard work, to such an extent that their views began to reflect those of the black female students at Bradford.

Clearly certain parallels can be drawn from my own research and that of Holland and Esienhart, in that black student groupings were identified who appeared to perceive the educational institution in a particular way and whose behaviour seemed to suggest a certain utilitarian or instrumentalist approach in their interaction with educational establishments. However, the critical stance adopted by the Bradford students took place in a black institution, whereas the positions adopted by the three student groupings in my study took place in a predominantly white institution.

Holland and Esienhart point to the fact that the black students 'getting over' interpretation apparently had a long academic history, I would argue that it possibly stemmed from the historical development of black consciousness and that what they were observing was a form of Black Scepticality that questioned the role of a black university as gatekeeper, to 'white educational credentials'.

In his book Minority Education and Caste (1978), John Ogbu suggested that members of a black minority group realise that they face a 'job ceiling', (this refers to practices that do not permit members of black minorities to compete freely for jobs for which they are qualified) and this knowledge channels and shapes their children's academic behaviour. Ogbu goes on to argue that black children see that their efforts in school do not have the same outcomes for members of their group as do similar efforts for members of socially dominant groups, such as middle class whites and consequently tend to put less effort and commitment into their school work. Ogbu offers this as the major reason why black students perform less well, on average, than other groups.

The central thrust of Ogbu's argument is the lower achievement of black students is due in part, to their accurate perception that for people like them, educational efforts and credentials are not rewarded in the opportunity structure in the same way as it is for whites. It is these conditions, Ogbu argues, that leads to the development of a cynical attitude. A positive belief in the link between education and future success may rest contradictorily with a deep seated knowledge of a black reality, as Ogbu states:

> **Although they have high aspirations for their children, (parents) also appear to teach them contradictory attitudes towards schooling. On the one hand, parents espouse the need to get more education education than they had and to work hard and do well in school. On the other hand, they also teach their children verbally and through their own life experiences of unemployment, underemployment, and other discriminations, as well as through gossips about similar experiences among relatives, neighbours and friends-through the actual texture of life-that even if they do well in school they may not**

> **do so as adults in the wider society (Ogbu, 1978: 10).**

Ogbu's analysis suggests that black minorities hold two conflicting sets of attitudes towards schooling. One set revolves around education as a vehicle towards equal opportunity, the other is rooted in your own and other people's experience of the actual returns from education and equal opportunity. Aspects of Ogbu's theory have relevance to my own research on black student experience of higher education. The critical perspective identified by Ogbu in young black school children appeared to be present in the modes of Black Scepticality that were observed on three courses within the institution and particularly in relation to their perceived occupational destinations. Other aspects of Ogbu's work are worth briefly discussing here, as they touch upon some points raised in my own study. Ogbu identifies four key parts of his work, they include; (1) The legacy of opposition between black and white people in the United States; (2) Folk theories of making it that differ from and contradict school and mainstream social ideology; (3) Black people's apprehension of unfair constrains on their participation in the labour market, and finally and most importantly, (4) the emphasis on oppositional identities that have developed in the black community over the long history of struggle since slavery, as well as the styles of speaking, fashions of dress, ways of succeeding and ways of acting in institutional contexts.

Clearly, the work of Holland and Esienhart and particularly the work of Ogbu have pointed to the existence of an independent black perspective concerning educational processes. A perspective

that has much of its articulation rooted in the fabric of black struggles over their material conditions. It is also the case that aspects of their work support my central contention of firstly a grounded Black Consciousness rooted in past historical conditions, but reworked and revived and woven into a specific Black Scepticality.

6.6 Black Scepiticality and Institutional Ideology

I began this journey of 'discovery' trying to make sense of the everyday perceptions and struggles that black students enter into as they past through an institution of higher education. I also wanted to gain some kind of cultural insight into the lived experience of 'blackness' in a predominantly white educational structure, and to use that experience as a vehicle to assess the socio-political stance of an institution that is committed to 'equal opportunities' and the 'widening of access' for 'non traditional students'.

It became clear that the lived experience was much too complex and dynamic to fit into a neat traditional sociological category of a black 'sub-culture'. It was important therefore to reconceptualise the black experience in a theoretical position that took into account the collective identities and historical prerequisites that had sowed the seeds of a deep seated Black Consciousness.

The historical existence of racism within the British context has meant that black people as a group have had to devise strategies of resistance to deal with white prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, the ideology of white liberalism within educational

discourses has created and sustained the 'myth of meritocracy', 'equal opportunity' and 'access'. Institutional academic courses that reflects aspects of these ideologies have been interrogated by various manifestations of Black Scepiticality, the limits of their legitimacy have come under close scrutiny and have at various instances been punctured by the black experience. However, at the same time the dialectical interplay of a specific course ethos, structure and location is forever impinging upon and influencing the way aspects of Black Scepticality develop in an institutional setting.

Black Scepiticality has to been seen as a legitimate assessment of the way in which white social formations have problematised and discriminated against black people, historically. It is a 'real' manifestation of the 'invisible war' that is forever taking place when Black knowledge claims begin to question the legitimacy and orthodoxy of white eurocentric structures of "knowledge".

The research generated from this study further indicates that there exist different interpretations of Black Scepticality and at another level competing constructions of 'Blackness'. An interesting example of this came at the end of my interview with Joyce, a black BEd student, when I asked her what she thought about the issues that were raised in our discussion. Her comments were very illuminating:

> ***Well when you first asked me I thought 'opps' because I am not your typical black person. I mean the school I went to there was only my family and another family there, so I was the only black girl in the class. That is the way its been through my Infant, Junior and Senior School. So I am not heavily into black culture, neither is***

> *my family. I mean we are the only black family on the estate. So if I spoke more Jamaican I don't know whether I would feel as if I was treated differently or singled out because of my accent. So I was wondering if my answers to you were black enough.*

Joyce's comments were interesting because she appeared to suggest that she did not see herself as a 'typical black person', and did not see herself as someone who defended black issues, which itself suggested that she was aware of a particular construct of what it was to be black, yet in her discussions she pointed to the failure of her course to deliver important elements of 'multiculturalism' and stated *'You don't do anything that comes under Afro-Caribbean at all'.* Joyce 'knows' what it is to be black and partially identifies with it, even as she distances herself and treats me as a knowledgeable member of the community, i.e. *'my answers to you were black enough'.* Joyce's comments also point to the importance of the 'community' in sustaining black identities in given situations.

This study has also shown that although black student groupings occupy different locations in terms of Black Scepiticality, the overall framework of Black Consciousness ties together their common experiences of living in a white society and progressing through a white educational institution. Thus, the existence of an independent black perspective remains a powerful force in the day to day structuring of their lives, whether they are conscious of it or not. For Kiela, an ex Dip HE student, her 'blackness' was the modality in which she conceptualised her higher educational experience:

> *I've always grown up with black people, and here on the course I feel I've made really good friends with black people. I can identify with them, there is a unity between*

> ***black people. I can relate to white people to a certain extent, but more so with black people because their presence makes me feel more comfortable.***

Black Scepticality then, is rooted in the historical formation of Black Consciousness, but develops its own institutional critique of specific educational processes. Increasingly for black students it becomes a way of locating oneself and others within the overarching structure of the institution; it is therefore the articulation of a different and partially independent stand-point which tries to 'resist' white cultural domination through institutional delineation. Black Scepticality articulates an alternative agenda, and a different plan. It makes the Black Experience central to the ethos and structure of educational institutions, as we shall see in the next chapter this means moving towards a black construct of access.

CHAPTER 7. TOWARDS A BLACK CONSTRUCT OF ACCESS

> **The internal condition of the institution as well as its environment may be more or less receptive to such change...creating the accessible institution may imply changes of character so fundamental that they cannot be achieved by consensus, leaving the options of not changing..or of changing by force (Chris Duke, 1989: 170).**

In the last chapter we saw how Black Scepticality can be seen as developing its own institutional critique of white educational structures from the lived experiences of black student groupings. While it is clear that the student groupings in the study operate at different levels within the Scepticality continuum, there are points at which their knowledge validation systems merge, particularly around such issues as the formation of the informal group, the role of black staff, and representation in the curriculum. Taken together, these core areas represent the starting point towards a black construct of access. In this chapter I will try to outline a range of policy initiatives that could be seen as representing a black model of access. Firstly I will discuss the role of black support groups in higher education. Secondly, by briefly drawing on black student concerns about staffing and curriculum, I will explore the policy implications by focusing on the work by

Sargeant and Walker (1992) and by discussing current debates about political correctness and the curriculum. Finally I will discuss the issues raised by my research report (1989) in terms of institutional access and localised black communities, and assess the relevance of a community access model as discussed by Reeves and Frankel (1991).

7.1 Formalised Black Support Groups

Black Scepticality operates as a powerful knowledge validation system that constructs black student realities in variety of ways. It is located in the 'informal' black space of an institution. The construction and implementation of a Black model of access does not necessarily mean that Black Scepticality would cease, rather the construct could perhaps point the way to how higher educational institutions could more vigorously create and sustain an educational and cultural ethos that respects and sympathises with the day to day struggles of black students studying in white higher educational structures. The work of Holland and Esienhart, (1990) along with evidence documented in this study points to the powerful influence of the informal group and its intricate internal logics. To what extent can the informal be built upon to create more formalised structures of communication, particularly between black students and white institutions? How can aspects of Black Scepticality be made more visible to such institutions. One possible answer is discussed below.

The research of Bird et al (1992), has important implications for the present discussions, as this project established 'formalised' black student support groups in two higher educational

institutions. The black student support groups provided a forum for black students openly to air there views and concerns about their treatment in the institution. The study showed that departmental support for such formalised groups was seen an imperative for 'altering practices that may be discriminatory'. All of the students found the support groups to be effective in placing their concerns on the institutional agenda, as Bird et al stated:

> **...Ultimately, a black student support group puts racism on the agenda whilst also providing an important vehicle for support. Timetabling of support groups makes these issues explicit and highlights the need for them (Bird et al, 1992: 20).**

Out of this project came recommendations for other higher educational institutions to establish similar formalised black support groups. I have identified seven very important ones, they are as follows:

1. Black student support groups should be timetabled and integrated into the normal work of the department. This timetabling should cut across the year divisions of the course such that students from different stages of the course can attend.

2. The department should provide a room on a regular basis for the group to meet.

3. Student support groups for other groups which are underrepresented in HEIs should be considered, as appropriate.

4. White students should be offered sessions which address the issues of discrimination and racism.

5. Departments should take the lead in advertising the existence and explaining the need for such groups in their prospectuses, literature, and during induction.

6. Support groups should be client centred-the agenda to be set by the students themselves with minimal departmental intervention.

7. A forum be available for feedback into Departmental meetings and relevant institutional committees, of issues or concerns that arise from the support group. In this way, no individual student is identified and greater weight may be given to the feelings and recommendations of the group.

8. That attendance at these groups be voluntary.

Taken together such recommendations if implemented in many more higher educational institutions would move some way in truly valuing and supporting the participation and progression of black students in higher education. Without such support, black student informal networks will have to continue bearing the burden for an unresponsive institution.

7.2 Black Staff

'More Black staff as role models. It is not nice to be surrounded by only white people'.

It was clear from the comments of many of the black students in the study that a key aspect of their Scepticality and a key

component of their black access construct was a need for the students to see and be able to relate to more black staff.[1] This issue did not just arise during interview, but was prevalent during black student discussions in the canteen.

This was seen as a key indicator of the way in which the institution did not acknowledge the black experience and the need for black representation. For these students, the lack of black staff spoke volumes about the institution's real commitment to racial equality. To begin to unpack institutional responses to the lack of black staff, it is worth while considering a research paper by Sargeant and Walker (1992) which looked at the recruitment of black staff in Further and Higher education.

Sargeant and Walker argue that such institutions operate within a framework called the "Rational Management Model", and that this model is underpinned by the assumption that the problem of black underrepresentation is located within the black community itself. The authors further argue that this assumption serves to deflect criticisms away from such institutions so that institutional ideologies and practices are left untouched.

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1. The failure of the institution to recruit more black staff was highlighted by the Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee Report (1990-91) which stated that no black or ethnic minority person was appointed at the SO or PO level or to any academic post. The report argued that black candidates were coming forward but their efforts were not being converted into appointments. Specific data produced on 64 academic and research posts showed that (9.8%) of applicants were black, yet none were appointed. The proportion of black staff had risen from (4.8%) in 1990, to (5.7%) in 1991. But this figure was some way from the (10%) target set for September 93.

The rational management model through its pathological assumptions attempts to blame the black community directly for the underrepresentation of black staff in further and higher educational institutions, as Sargeant and Walker state:

> **How then does the 'rational management model' seek to account for the phenomenon of black under-representation, and to what extent can we take as axiomatic the explanations which have been proposed ? One response to those questions is the empirical claim which is often made that there are few black people with appropriate qualifications for employment within F/HE. In our view this is a myth. If it had any credence at the start of the migration/settlement process, thirty years into that process, the argument can no longer be sustained. Whilst it is true that black people have been less well served by the educational system than their white counterparts, it is also true that there are nonetheless a large number of black people who do have the kinds of qualifications which these institutions value and seek (Sargeant and Walker, 1992: 2).**

Sargeant and Walker also point to other arguments that flow from this model which blame the apparent low rate of applications from black people, in response to publicly advertised posts, on the lack of interest within the black community. The assumption that underpins this view is that the institution has tried its best to recruit black staff but all to no avail.

Evidence already discussed in this thesis about the underemployment of black graduates adds empirical support to the view held by Sargeant and Walker that:

> **When black people do apply for posts within the F/ HE sector, and are short-listed for interview.....Impressionistic evidence at least suggests that there is a mismatch between the number of black people who appear before selection panels, and the number actually offered employment....in black professional circles, one**

> **of the key issues is the degree to which attendance for interview quite often results in non-appointment...It is interesting to note that, within the "rational management model", those features of the informal process(for example, in assessing how well a candidate may or may not fit into the organisation) which place black people at a disadvantage are marginalised in its attempt to explain the phenomenon of black underrepresentation (Sargeant and Walker, 1992: 2).**

The "rational management model" adopted by many further and particularly HE institutions gives the impression of operating fair and clear recruitment practices and procedures, but this belies the reality of hidden cultural and institutional barriers work to the detriment of black people. For instance the way in which institutions sometimes structure job descriptions and personal specifications that may automatically disadvantage black people, by specifying requirements that may be superfluous to a given post. As with the admissions process to higher education, the balance of power in the labour market recruitment process lies deeply embedded in institutional contexts of the bureaucracy. In this situation there is a tendency for white organisations, consciously or unconsciously, to 'bias' the rules in favour of white majority applications (Jenkins, 1986).[2] There are ways in which the Rational Management Model reflects aspects of the 'market oriented access model' in that both constructs suggests that access to HE or employment structures are relatively non-problematic providing one has the 'ability', 'credentials' and aptitude to

2. In his work on racism and employer recruitment procedures, (1986) Jenkins argues that employer recruitment practices are determined by social and cultural assumptions about who can or cannot fill certain positions. He suggests that higher education credentials are seen by employers as only one criterion amongst many in the social and cultural sorting processes of organisations. He argues therefore, that 'race' can be an important variable in non-recruitment.

achieve. Both models share an assumption that black students and the communities they originate from are problematic and pathological and that HE recruitment and curicula practices are relatively objective.

Sargeant and Walker outline the existence of an alternative institutional construct, which they call 'The Equal opportunities Anti-racist model'. This model examines the whole process of recruitment and selection from a perspective that takes account of certain factors that operate to the detriment of black people during the time of recruitment and selection in further and higher education structures and crucially focuses on the particular history that has taken place around the relationship of black people to elite educational structures. This model is important because aspects of its provision correspond quite closely with the black access model. Sargeant and Walker make the important point that:

> **..the "Equal Opportunities Anti-Racist model"....highlights the existence of causal factors which have to be understood within a framework which not only examines the ways in which recruitment and selection practices are conducted, but does so in a context where the whole *culture and ethos* of the F/HE institution is examined, along with all other areas of its activity..it highlights and signals the need for F/HE institutions which are seeking to improve the participation rates of black staff to address as their starting point not the technical aspects of recruitment and selection, but rather the cultures and traditions within these institutions, and the r*elationship between these institutions and the black communities*, which in the eyes of the black communities at least, have generated impressions that black people are not welcomed and valued (Sargeant and Walker, 1992: 4).**

The same kinds of institutional cultures and ethos that Black student Scepticality interrogates, play a central role in the underrepresentation of black staff, particularly in HE. The institutional creation of the 'ideal' candidate, or of 'fitting in' tends to affirm the experiences, skills and background of the prevailing group of white middle class people. This whole process is often value laden and culturally specific, as Sargeant and Walker state:

> **..the problem here often is what potential black colleagues are being required to 'fit' in to. If the prevailing culture is white, and does not reflect the experience nor value the cultures of black people, then a black candidate may be perceived as a threat to the existing culture simply by displaying a positive sense in relation to his/her culture and identity..One cannot under-estimate the resistances within the variegated cultures within F/HE to the notion of black participation. What is beyond dispute is the manner in which it is possible to construct a whole set of different arguments to justify the notion that black candidates lack what is required to 'fit in', without having to make resort to racism of an overt kind (Sargeant and Walker, 1992: 7).**

The Equal Opportunities Anti-Racist model also deals with issues surrounding the racial mix of interviewing panels and the importance of having black representation on such panels. This to some extent was supported by positive reactions of the construction students in my own study to being interviewed by a black person. This model also acknowledges the fact that white applicants often have intimate knowledge of F/HE structures or access to people who can fill them in. This puts them at an advantage over those black people whose work experience, though relevant, may not be mainstream.

It should be clear from the discussions so far that the ethos and organisational culture of an institution has a profound effect on its commitment to recruit black staff and on its relationship with the black community. Sargeant and Walker have correctly identified some of the evasive strategies that institutions can use to justify their apparently 'objective' recruitment procedures. However, I would argue that it goes deeper than this, for institutions can use the concept of 'staff development' as a diversion from the central issues of recruiting more black staff and changing existing institutional ethos and culture. The report mentioned earlier, by John Bird et al (1992) entitled 'Widening Access to Higher Education for Black People', was also guilty in some respects of using evasive strategies to side step the thorny issue of the lack of black staff, particularly in higher education. For having gathered substantial evidence from black students regarding their deep concern over the lack of black staff within their respective institutions, Bird et al could only offer staff development sessions as a cure to this problem as he stated:

> **Against this background, the Project offered a series of staff development sessions across the 4 HEIs on the theme of Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education in order to address some of the issues identified by the students (Bird et al, 1992: 24).**

The crucial issue of appropriate strategies to recruit and retain more black staff was conspicuous by its absence. Without question staff development has a place in changing institutional ethos and practice, particularly in most HE institutions where the majority of staff is white. But, issues of black student access to HE cannot and should not be divorced from the recruitment of black staff; they

are for a great many black students inextricably linked and therefore central to a black access model.

7.3 Blacking up the Curriculum

"Multi-racial issues should be used in all modules. There should be more black books, videos and plays. There needs to be specific courses on black historical development".

It was clear from the previous chapter that Black student Scepticality confronted at various points white knowledge claims about what was a relevant curriculum. Black students critically thinking through their cultural and social conditions laid bare the 'selective tradition' that operated within a particular institution. Here they 'saw' how certain symbolic meanings and practices were chosen for emphasis, while their own lived experience was either neglected, diluted or reinterpreted through non-challenging definitions of basic power relationships. In many ways black students were driven to find an alternative 'curriculum', one that acknowledged their black heroes, such as Dubois, King, Malcom X, Ghandi, CLR James, Marcus Garvey, Black Panthers, H. Tubman etc. This historical excavation formed part of the alternative black curriculum which demanded a thorough going acknowledgement of the black influence in the Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences. This meant acknowledging the role of Black History,

Black Religions, Black Politics, Black Women in History, Black People in Science and a black perspective on Psychology. In her study on black and white students in HE, Rosen (1990) made the point concerning black students that:

> **Frequently the subject matter taught did not reflect the experience of the students. They reported Eurocentric Psychology and Sociology...The Black experience was mainly ignored or given token acknowledgement (Rosen, 1990: 93).**

The black access model points to an HE curriculum that must overtly and covertly value the experiences of black people in a racist society. This has to be the starting point for the creation of an higher education body of knowledge that relates more to the everyday struggles and interaction that black individuals and their communities enter into.

Debates about curriculum control and ideology have in the past mainly focused on secondary education and the structuring of knowledge. It is only in recent times that HE has come under close scrutiny concerning its multicultural or anti-racist subject provision, a point highlighted by Thomas (1990) when she states that:

> **It might seem like heresy to suggest this, but infact, universities and polytechnics are *worse* than schools in many respects. For example, a number of anti-racist initiatives have taken place in schools, and schools are expected to provide at least some form of multicultural education: but how much multi-cultural teaching takes place at degree level? (Thomas, 1990: 182).**

Black students are questioning the 'relevance' of such knowledge, when it fails to introduce their specific experiences of the world into the classroom and lecture hall. In American institutions of higher education control of the curriculum is being fought for by academic professionals and students who have been labelled 'Politically correct persons' (PCPs) who have been accused of wanting to junk the entire Western tradition. Colin Williams (1991) describes PC as: A higher education system which is

> **Marxism without the economics, a revolution made with words instead of weapons. It's a new attempt to change society by changing the way people talk and think...Dismissing the classics as the products of 'Dead White Males' (DWMs), PC seeks a multicultural approach studying the work of blacks, gays, women and other minorities...At the University of California, Los Angeles, an official questionnaire asked students to report on racial or sexual stereotypes in their courses-until the academic staff protested that could apply to most historical texts...Community was PC's catalyst, its active ingredient. PC came into being when the slogan 'community' was joined to a previously obscure academic debate....theories of deconstruction and others were taken to prove there is no such thing as objective truth, that everything is political. Everything has a hidden agenda....the hidden agenda of Western thought is oppression and discrimination (Williams, 1991: 15).**

Within the British context, and particularly within this study it is clear that some black students are rigourously questioning the whole basis of what they are being taught in terms of 'objective academia', more and more the issue of 'relevance' is becoming central to their personal and group knowledge validation systems.

The *black access model* is concerned with black student and staff recruitment, throughout the whole institution, particularly in areas where there is severe black underrepresentation. There is also a demand for a more responsive and relevant injection of black culture and its richness into the curriculum. There is also a requirement for positive support and guidance for black students as they pass through the institution, along with consciousness raising sessions with black staff either formally or informally. This construct acknowledges the way racial discrimination operates in the labour-market, and seeks through adequate on going careers advice and work-shop sessions to equip students with the skills to confront positively situations where they may be disadvantaged because of their colour. Direct institutional intervention can be made by an HE provider, by scrutinising the recruitment policies, in terms of 'race' of prospective employers who attend various 'milk rounds', and can thus feed such information back to the black student population so students can make informed judgements about possible employers.

7.4 Institutional Ethos and Black Communities

The traditional academic culture that exists in many HE institutions is one that extols the virtues of European intellectual development. It is one that speaks in a language of superior academic knowledge and 'objectivity'. It is a place that often tacitly assumes the prerequisite of a 'shared white-anglo saxon past'. For some black students who enter such institutions their own lived location does not sit happily within prevailing culture and ethos. Their own unique experience and understanding of their struggles is not always reflected at the level of institutional

awareness and day to day course interaction. Their perception of institutional ethos is often related to how much of their own cultural perspective they can see reflected in the structure of the institution. This can be seen in black student concerns about such issues as black staffing levels and the curriculum.

The point being made here is that much of HE ethos stands outside the experience of being a black minority in Britain. The institutions are not black enough in terms of how they relate to and deal with black students. Very few institutions make a serious effort to embedd themselves within localised black communities; rather they flirt with the black communities with various short term initiatives that never truly break the higher education cultural and material boundary. The need for the institution to become blacker, came out of black student discourses within the institution. But crucially it was also informed by my own experience of working for the institution in a short-term post as Ethnic Minority Liaison officer during the period of July to September 1989.

Through this post I contacted various black organisations including voluntary groups, Churches, Mosques and Gurdwaras. My initial concern had been just to publicise the institution in terms of the educational programmes that it had on offer. However, it became clear to me from my day to day interaction with black individuals and black organisations that although they were interested in getting more involved with the institution they were also very suspicious of it in terms of its commitment to

racial equality. Indeed some individuals at senior levels within their organisations referred to the institution as being racist.

Whether such perceptions were correct or not they did create they view that the institution was not as accessible for black people as it should be. The report produced 14 recommendations, and some of the key ones are detailed below:

1. Follow-up liaison work is essential to maintain credibility of the black recruitment drive and concretize communicational networks between the polytechnic and local black groups.

2. The Enterprise Studies Unit should develop relationships with black employers for course design, delivery, review and assessment. There is allot of potential and willingness to be involved in this field. There should be at least one black representative on the Enterprise Steering Committee.

3. Wolverhampton Polytechnic should consider seriously the model of and liaison with Bilston Community College in its strategies for black recruitment, particularly the aspect of establishing pilot taster courses in black organisation premises e.g. community centres, church halls etc.

4. The Polytechnic should employ a permanent person full or part-time as black liaison officer to visit local black groups, inform them of educational programmes available at the polytechnic and liaise internally with Polytechnic staff to ensure effective follow up of applications from black candidates.

5. The Black Liaison Officer should try to gain access to local schools with high proportions of black pupils. Seminars could be held with 4th, 5th and 6th form students (during careers or social education periods) to discuss the kinds of courses that the Polytechnic has to offer students over 18 years of age.

6. The Polytechnic should increase the representation and credibility of black people within its own staff population.

7. The Polytechnic should establish equality targets as part of its mission statement ensuring that black people, women and disabled people constitute an acceptable level on all courses.

These recommendations were sent to the Planning and Development Committee for consideration. Their response to the recommendations were included in an internal memorandum (November,1990), which stated: (1) 'This was vital but a structure to continue initiatives was needed'. (2) No response to this recommendation. (3) 'There was merit in this since Bilston was an important feeder college for the Polytechnic'. (4) 'This, particularly outreach, work must be taken seriously'. (5) No response to this recommendation. (6) 'This was current policy, although there had been limited success to date. (7). '..it was difficult to make much immediate progress, given that this years' targets had already been agreed. In fact it would be difficult to make much immediate progress, given that this years' targets had already been agreed...current data within the polytechnic from which to extrapolate was unreliable. Even so, the Committee wished to be as proactive as possible...that this recommendation be referred

back to the Equal Opportunities Committee for advice on the methodological means by which targets could be set with the view to introducing targets in the next planning round; that admissions teams encourage applications from black people, women and the disabled wherever possible'.

Out of the seven recommendations outlined here, three of them have had tangible results. Firstly, the Polytechnic employed a full time Ethnic Minorities Liaison Officer. Secondly the Ethnic Minorities Liaison Officer has initiated a Black Mentor programme, where black degree students visit schools to talk to school children about higher education. Thirdly, the Polytechnic has set a target of 15 per cent recruitment of black students throughout the institution. Without doubt these three developments represent a positive step by the institution, however the need for direct greater black community involvement within the institution has apparently been neglected. Clearly from the institution's point of view there is a resource problem. However, if it is committing itself to wider educational access, it has to respond to the needs of its localised black communities with more than symbolic gestures. The recommendations outlined in the report share many of the goals identified in the model of community access which to varying degrees have been developed by adult and further educational institutions. Reeves and Frankel (1991) have identified key aspects of this community access provision, which includes:

-geographical access=(providing outreach courses and extra transport)

-temporal access=(extending opening hours or providing for different modes of attendance at times convenient to particular groups)

-pastoral support=(advice and guidance, counselling, child care facilities, pastoral curriculum, personal security)

-financial support or incentives=(maintenance allowances, training grants, fee waivers)

-cultural support=(promoting community languages, culture and religious festivals, programmes using community languages as a medium of instruction, classes targetted at African-Caribbean and Asian groups).

It is clear that most of this kind of provision would be compatible within a black access model. The notion of 'community access' in the above sense has largely been ignored by most higher educational institutions.

If HE institutions are seriously going to create wider access to educational programmes they must increasingly accept that they cannot do this without rethinking their approach to the notion of 'academic standards'. One saw the contradictory messages that were being sent out to HE institutions through government literature on access to HE. For on the one hand they were saying that 'more means different' and on the other 'more means worse'. Thus if such institutions are to gain the trust of their localised

black communities they must increasingly acknowledge that notions of 'academic standards' are not neutral and are essentially, a culturally loaded system of belief and that the perceptions of black communities and other groups about what constitutes 'the ability to benefit', a 'broad HE curriculum' and 'Standards appropriate to HE' may indeed be relative, but no less important.

It is partly through the ideological manipulation of the concept of 'standards' that many HE institutions have managed to maintain their boundaries from community based initiatives and other statutory bodies who invoke different approaches to this question. Leslie Wagner (1989) points to problems faced in trying to unhinge the concept of 'academic standards' when he argues that:

> **The argument that wider access leads to lower standards is essential to maintain the privileges of the academic elite. And the notion of what is meant by 'standards' and whether we are referring to 'adequate' or 'high' is so vague that the word is capable of a range of meanings to suit any argument. The issue will never be resolved because whenever evidence is provided to refute the proposition that access leads to lower standards, the meaning of 'standards' will be redefined....The exclusivist culture of higher education, indeed of our whole society, bites deep into its soul. To widen is to weaken. For all its fine words, access is not only not part of that culture, but a threat to its very existence. And that is why the debate over standards will continue for evermore (Wagner, 1989: 36).**

A black construct of access links together such issues as black support groups, progression and occupational destination, black staffing, the curriculum, institutional access and localised black communities. It starts from the assumption that white institutional racism plays a pivotal role in restricting the

educational life chances of black people. It advocates that such institutions must be made to make a paradigmatic shift in their organisational culture to reflect aspirations and concerns of localised black communities. A higher education system which is relevant to the needs of black people must truly acknowledge the barriers that exist in a white society and give due respect to the struggles and strategies that black people develop to survive. For the crucial question that a black model of access poses at this point in time, is not simply an issue of equal access to existing educational power structures, but to ultimately find ways of transforming them so they become black in culture, blacker in ethos and blacker in understanding, the 'Ivory Tower' must come down.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION: STATE INTERVENTIONS/ SYMBOLIC GESTURES AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

The experiences of black students passing through an institution of higher education cannot be divorced from the experiences of black people in Britain. Such educational structures reflect and reproduce aspects of the wider race inequality, but they also provide limited educational opportunity for such students to advance themselves academically. This issue is complex because it draws together the problematic of culture, agency and structure, and how they influence each other. This study has tentatively tried to explain how black students make sense of their day to day interaction within a specific higher educational institution.

The study has emphasised the importance of the historical struggles that black people have had to engage in from slavery to the present day, in terms of fighting racial oppression of various forms. Such experiences have contributed to the development of black consciousness, which itself has been modified and reworked by successive generations of the black population. It is precisely this rich tradition that has been drawn upon by black students, reconstructed and synthesized within a particular educational context. It is through this reformation of aspects of consciousness, within specific educational structures, that a more critical perspective has developed.

The study has identified a particular ideological attitude that black students hold as they pass through the institution. Furthermore, the evidence has pointed to the importance of this Black Scepticality in shaping black student behaviours within the

institution. However, this Scepticality is not totally uniform, indeed the research indicates that its presence differs from one black student grouping to another. So the black students in my study could be said to occupy particular positions on a continuum of Scepticality. The evidence generated in this study would indicate that black Scepticality operates at many different levels, it can be both attitudinal and behavioural. It can be manifested through personal biography i.e. retrospective and through informal group membership i.e. re-enterpretive. It can operate through the construction of 'performance'-that is, in some instances, appearing to accept the meritocratic institutional language of 'individual' attainment and mobility, but recognising that group membership, identity and experience are often at odds with the real outcomes of such institutional language. Group membership, identity and experience play a crucial role in how black students perceive and are perceived by white higher educational structures, as supported by the comments of Hazel, (Dip HE) Emelda, (BEd), and Baljit (HNC):

> ***....we are in a white institution, we have to encourage each other to be proud. We are role models.***
>
> ***...the more I was looking around the more I was the one black person there...if you have got somebody who is really say, black and they are with you on the course then you tend to feel more secure don't you.***
>
> ***...Other students don't want to mix with us because we are all black. Other than our own group, nobody wants to talk to us.***

Three black students on different courses within a higher educational institution, but all articulating in similar ways the way black Scepticality can shape the day to day understanding of white educational structures. It asks the questions Where does my

history and culture fit into what I am being taught, and why is it not validated within the institutional ethos, culture and curriculum?, Who is around to support me and validate my right to question what I am being taught and my right to be here?. Black Scepticality therefore requires a deliberate search for space, so that individual and group logics can be worked through. The creation of 'space' means that participants believe that mutually they are collectively creating the optimum setting so that emergent ideas and strategies can grow and be utilised by drawing upon the experiences and analytical competencies of the informal group. It is in the corridor, in the lecture hall, in the canteen and in the mind where Scepticality is kept alive.

Scepticality constructs an alternative model of the institution which questions aspects of institutional meritocracy. Black Consciousness sows the seeds of white societal distrust, black Scepticality interrogates and tests the extent to which white higher educational structures reflect the black presence adequately through ethos and culture. It is through the reformulation of the 'seeds of distrust' into the mechanism of Black Scepticality that students articulate their experience.

Black Scepticality has also pointed to the importance of the informal group in providing cultural sustenance, where strategies could be worked through and replenished at each location of group interaction. The experiences of the Dip HE students illustrated the practical manifestation of this cultural reservoir in terms of its transmission and application, as Betty's and Leroy's comments showed:

People will help you with books etc. In the first year we worked as a team. This brings you into contact with other blacks and from that a relationship is formed.

Although we sat together collectively in groups we didn't know each other, but we all sat together. It was an unconscious thing.

The research carried out by Holland and Eisenhart (1990) gave further weight to the existence of this strategy adopted by black students to counteract what they perceived as the workings of racist educational structures. The students in Holland and Esienhart's study took notes for absent friends, shared books and took what ever short-cuts they had to pass academic work and thus get nearer to leaving the institution. Through distorted racist representations, the black informal group may be perceived by white students and staff in a different light

However, the issue does not end here, because just as black consciousness is influenced by particular historical and material conditions, so to is black Scepticality influenced dialectically by institutional structure, ethos and particular course philosophies. In this context black consciousness is almost synchronic in that it is fundamentally rooted in the past, while Black Scepticality is more diachronic in that it operates in the present. Indeed the research suggests that course philosophy impinges on and is linked to the development of institutional black Scepticality. The various philosophies that exist at institutional and course level are never totally monolithic, rather they contain elements that give rise to oppositional forms, which in this context is 'lived through' black Scepticality, which as a cultural reservoir, will be made available

for those who follow. The study has attempted to give some insight into the way that specific forms of black student agency make sense of their particular educational environment. However, such lived micro processes do not occur in a vacuum. Black student experience is also influenced by wider parameters, both structural and ideological. The debates and discourses about 'wider educational access', 'equal opportunities' and 'boundary management" in complex ways feed into and sometimes contradict the subjective realities of those passing through such structures.

8.1 Models and Modes of Access

The research undertaken for this study has indicated that there exist competing models of educational access: the Market Oriented Access Model, the Social Justice Access Model, and the Social Engineering Access Model. Each of these models has implicit assumptions built into it concerning the issues of black educational access. The Market model assumes that black student needs will be catered for as HE institutions expand in line with labour-market demands and compete with each other in the 'student market', that 'disadvantaged groups' who have the 'ability' will enter and succeed in higher education. This model is dominated through the ideology of funding bodies who seek institutional change through interventionist programmes such as 'special positive action initiatives for black people'. The apparent contradictions in this model are lived out on a day to day basis through a black student Scepticality influenced through the discourse of 'special' or abnormal provision for those who are

'capable' and indeed employable within specific sectors of the labour-market.

The Social Justice Model acknowledges some of the problems black and non-traditional students face in confronting HE structures, and argues for institutions to become more flexible and responsive to different kinds of students. There is a view that student potential should be seen in terms of their 'ability to benefit' from a programme of study rather than a string of 'good' A level grades. This model should be the most adaptable to anti-racist elements, but the kind of black Scepticality confronting this model shows its limitations and contradictions when linked to black student experiences.

The Social Engineering Access Model assumes that targeted professional programmes of study can create access for selected groups of people who are economically and socially disadvantaged. In terms of black people, this view supports the creation of black professional role models whose presence acts as a catalyst for wider community educational and occupational development. The BEd students who are destined for role model status had to cope with a different set of contradictions i.e. individually selected, a small minority without larger group support for any collective understanding. However, these students demonstrated a more individualised Scepticality in making sense of ethnocentric curicula and racism within schools.

8.2 The Boundary and Access

The assumptions that radiate from these three models are bound up and framed within the day to day operation of institutional policy and practice which mediates with, and is challenged by the competing locations of Black Scepticality. The day to day structuring of institutional policy operates both internally and externally. Internally through the mediated construction of course philosophy and ethos, externally through boundary management (Parry, 1989; Neave, 1982b; Schuller, Tight and Weil, 1988). Here the institution frames the legitimacy of what it sees as acceptable 'access arrangements', and in so doing seeks to control the types of students passing through its borders. Indeed the numbers of students from selected groups may increase, but the points or routes of entry remain relatively fixed and controlled. Smith and Saunders (1991) add further weight to the application of boundary management by pointing to what they see as the failure of the university sector to respond to the need for demographically broader access and enhanced competence. They go on to argue that:

> **This analysis could be extended to the polytechnics. While they have been much more flexible in responding to changing demands than have the universities, they also tend towards the conventional model of provision (Smith and Saunders, 1991: 58).**

The ideology and ambiguities of 'wider access' as discussed in chapter one, serve to misrepresent the power of further education and other lower sector organisations to seriously break through the boundary. The use of kitemarks to denote good 'standards' operates as a buffer in controlling access to higher education

The study has indicated that in the case of black students, notions of 'wider access' have to be linked to the more qualitative issues of cultural representativeness and institutional responsiveness. For such students increasing the numbers of black students is important but equally so is institutional recognition of black struggles, achievements, and the black experience. The literature identified in chapter one specifically pointed to a national situation in which the black experience had been totally ignored by some HE institutions. This was most evident in some institutions in a total lack of either equal opportunities or anti-racist policy (CRE, 1989). Such oversights by certain institutions send powerful symbolic messages to black students in particular,and to the black population in general.

8.3 Institutional Language and Symbolic Gestures

The construction of governmental educational policy, the interpretation and implementation of such policy by higher educational institutions, the construction of external and internal institutional objectives and the development of black institutional Scepticality represent concentric circles of influence which effect the educational experience in each zone. While there are discontinuities and ambiguities there exists also patterns of continuity. The way that black people as a group have been marginalised by the state in terms of them being viewed as a 'problem' has continued to be played out by various social institutions, particularly within education where 'the problem has been reconstructed through various policy formulations such as 'integration', 'cultural pluralism', 'anti-racism' and 'widening

access'.These trends, not necessarily coherent still represent a continuous form of 'state intervention' at a wider level and specific institutional course access at another.The black construction course represents aspects of state intervention via a particular funding agency with a specific interventionist strategy. This point was highlighted when the Training Agency (1989) argued that it would consider course proposals which:

> **....reflected local and regional skill shortage supply difficulties, particularly in science and engineering, mathematics and computing, information technology,management and business skills, will be of particular interest to us (Training Agency, 1989: 2).**

Intervention in this context could only operate if it was shown that black recruitment into construction management locally was underrepresented. Black students were thus being earmarked for certain niches in the labour-market. The Training Agency's interventionist strategy was also apparent in its Enterprise into Higher Education Initiative which sought to move institutions away from traditional narrow disciplines to a broader 'competence' based curriculum, that would equip students with the personal transferable skills that employers were seeking.

The Dip HE course did not represent the same kind of state intervention as the black construction course, but it did represent a new direction in higher educational programmes. The need for such a course was first voiced by the National Union of Students in evidence submitted to the Robbins Report (1963). The students were concerned about the inflexibility and narrowness of traditional degree routes and were looking for something which

would allow people to keep their options open and encourage more innovatory teaching methods. Although different kinds of Dip HE developed in institutions of higher education, the core belief of flexibility and innovation was ever present. Bruce, Cooper and Doherty (1989) in a longitudinal study entitled 'The Dip HE Experience' argued that the Dip He was used by some polytechnics:

> **..to open access to HE for a wider clientele than traditional students..to attract a different type of student and to provide a different kind of higher education:to promote new ideas and theories about the nature of teaching and learning: and to introduce new interdisciplinary subjects, thereby extending the flexibility and range of choice in higher education (Bruce et al, 1989: 5).**

The Dip HE insertion in higher education was seen as a catalyst for change, just as further education Access courses were first viewed in the late 70s and early 80s. Specific Access Courses were established to facilitate the entry of black students into social work and teaching as a profession as the DES's (1977) memorandum to seven local authorities stated:

> **..to insure that all members of the community have equal opportunities to develop their capabilities and abilities to the full and in particular to encourage the entry into the profession and responsible posts in worthwhile careers of those whose background or experience could prove valuable, but who lacks the requisite qualifications for entry to the appropriate training course (DES, 1977: 4).**

The DES had taken the decision to initiate such 'preparatory courses' partly because of evidence of underrepresentation and discrimination collected by The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration (1976-77), and the Community

Relations Commission (1977), and partly because it recognised the difficulty in increasing the number of black teachers quickly due to cutbacks in teacher training programmes. The central thrust of this intervention was to create a ladder for black students to enter teacher education programmes.

Initial teacher education programmes were given guideline's in 1985 by the DES which specifically related to the recruitment of black students onto such courses. It was suggested that Teaching institutions should: (a) advertise their courses locally in the black press, (b) develop working links with multi-ethnic schools and encourage black pupils to consider teaching as a career, (c) examine their selection procedures periodically to ensure that they do not include any unconscious bias on racial, cultural or religious grounds, (d) stress the importance of preparing teachers of all backgrounds to teach in a mult-ethnic society, and (f) seek to involve black teachers as occasional lecturers on their courses or as supervisors of students on teaching practices. However, if one considers the findings, discussed in chapter five of this study, carried out by Cole (1989) and Blatchford (1990). It would appear that there still exists a large gap in terms of turning policy into practice.

The DES directive (1985) also sought to place limits on the number of places given to Access students on teacher education and other degree courses, as it stated:

> **At least 75% of the students entering any one course should possess the normal qualifications for entry to a first degree in order to ensure that the standards of the course are not compromised**

> **so as to accommodate a higher proportion of non-conventional entrants (DES, 1985: 25).**

The DES's interventions in this area are contradictory, as they have appeared to give access courses their support in using them as a vehicle of progression to teacher education, but then suggesting that too many Access students may lower standards. We have seen in chapter one that this perception of such courses still exists, even though many access courses now have national recognition and are supposed to be the 'third recognised route' into higher education. One possible reason for the overall contradiction is that initial teacher training courses, like the one in this study, have not had the rationale of specific minority recruitment built into them in the same way as Dip HE. The BEd wanted black recruits but only in small numbers, where they would be taught in the same way as everyone else on the basis of potential teaching ability. Thus the BEd's form of access is controlled both inside and outside the higher education boundary through course ethos, existing practices in schools, and government policy operating through DFE and CATE. The contradiction in the Dip HE was that although it was innovatory, and radical course, supposedly linked to student centred learning, it was not a degree in its own right, it had to join with the conventional degree route within the institution. So it could be argued that the Dip HE was to a certain extent controlled within the higher education boundary. The contradiction in the HNC course was that it was offering a conventional qualification, which was available to other students, within a specific and 'special' course. The HNC course rather like the BEd was controlled through course ethos, existing practices in industry, and through

government policy through the influence of the Training Agency. It could be argued that the Dip HE could be seen as offering equal opportunity to a lower level qualification, while the HNC offered equal opportunity to the same qualification via a specialised route, and the BEd offered equal opportunity to the same qualification by the same route but only for limited numbers.

The interventions by the state, through quasi-governmental agencies at the macro level, at times complies with and at times contradicts institutional policies. However, the state is always able to adapt to changing circumstances and establish new agendas that affect educational, social, economic and political institutions as John Solomos states:

> **It has been shown that over a wide variety of policy arena the role of the state not only expanded but has taken on new forms, adapting not only existing institutional structures but setting up new frameworks through which political decisions and programmes could be formulated and implemented (Solomos, 1988: 15).**

John Solomos in his work on the social construction of black youth as a social problem by the state has demonstrated how specific state interventions in the form of YOP, YTS and the MSC have systematically discriminated against black youth in terms of education and training provision, and ideologically helped to perpetuate commonsense ideologies about the 'problems' black youth pose for white society in terms of social disruption (Solomos, 1983). Solomos argues that much of state policy in the area of black youth has been nothing more than a knee-jerk

reaction to the moral panic about the perceived threat of black youth to social stability. He argues furthermore that such state interventions have implicitly had a coercive function. The contribution of Solomos is important to this study because it draws our attention to the symbolic, ideological and coercive elements that underpin particular initiatives that often profess to 'help black people'. If one considers the discussions that have taken place in this thesis on the political and ideological nature of equal opportunity and wider access debates surrounding the recruitment of more black students into higher education, one can argue that certain parallels exist between them and state initiatives aimed at black youth. Speaking of this intervention and its connection to racial discourses about black youth, John Solomos argues that:

> **....successive political interventions towards this social group have been shaped by wider ideologies and practices about 'race relations' in British society....although such policies have typically been legitimised as giving some form of 'special help' to enable young blacks to achieve equality of opportunity, they have been formulated and implemented in ambiguous and contradictory ways....far from overcoming lack of opportunity and racial discrimination against young blacks, such policies have worked in ways which have often harmed the interests of racial equality and reinforced dominant stereotypes (Solomos, 1988: 146).**

I would not argue that Solomos's state interventions operate in exactly the same way as institutional constructs of educational access but there do exist similarities, particularly in the notion of 'special courses' like the black construction course in the study. Particularly the way external agencies have tried to guide educational policy, and within that equal opportunities policy, in

the direction of the market. The ideological discourses around such provision has been shown to be problematic and contradictory on an institutional level as well as a personal level for some students. Indeed, black student experience as expressed through Black Scepticality articulates with and intersects different institutional versions of access and equal opportunity in its 'meritocratic forms', and in some ways reveals the contradictions in governmental and institutional interventions that stand outside, mediate and operate within the boundary of higher education. Furthermore the 'special needs' ideology which has been implicit in the assumptions behind 'special education and training courses' carries with it a whole host of linked assumptions around 'disability', deficiencies in education, and deficiencies in family and cultural background, coupled with the belief that such provision can bring about some measure of equality, or have some effect in tackling racial discrimination. The three courses detailed in this study on the face of it offered the black students the promise of educational credentials which they could cash in the labour-market. The ideological linkage between higher educational credentials and the labour market hides the extent to which labour market dictates can be, or won't be fixed by institutional policy. Therefore, the reality of racial discrimination, and recession meant that for some students in the study, their courses had not delivered what they had expected. The critical projections offered by the Dip HE in terms of the link between higher credentials and employability, would appear to have been justified, as opposed to a belief on the HNC course that vocational employment was just around the corner. Indeed the kinds of discriminatory practices outlined by Solomos operating at the

lower end of the youth training market, appears in some cases to be replicated at the higher level of black graduates seeking employment (Ballard and Holden, 1975; Brennan and McGeevor, 1990).

Indeed it becomes increasingly difficult to see how such provision can seriously challenge the embedded practices of discrimination and institutionalised racist practices (Jenkins and Solomos, 1987; Edwards, 1987). It is thus becomes problematic to speak of creating 'wider access' to existing elitist structures, which are by their very nature culturally biased in favour of certain groups in society. However, the public prenouncements and illusory reform that is muddled and masked in access discourses serves it purpose to contradict and confuse the deep seated structural inequalities of race and class. Solomos, in his discussion on the symbolic aspects of state interventions makes the important point that:

> **...governments tend to respond to demands for change emanating from relatively powerless groups with publicly announced and widely broadcast promises of fundamental change in the short term, by setting up quasi-governmental mediating institutions and by emphasising their responsiveness to the demands of powerless groups. But it may also be the result of an awareness among policy-makers that initiatives which are popularly seen as helping minority groups (such as 'anti-poverty' and 'anti-discrimination' programmes) help absorb and limit the scope of change, while being popularly seen as 'helping' the poor, the blacks, or whichever group demands to which they are responding (Solomos, 1987:34).**

Edelman, (1977) argues that much of the debates about state and institutional initiatives are masked in what he calls 'political language', where the definition of particular issues are continually

being advanced through recurring linguistic myths that justify a particular kind of action or inaction, as Edelman states:

> **It is language that evokes most of the political 'realities' people experience. It is through metaphor, metonym, and syntax that linguistic references evoke mythical cognitive structures in people's minds...A reference in an authoritative public statement or in a social security law to 'training programmes' for the unemployed is a metonymic evocation of a larger structure of beliefs: that job training is efficacious in solving the unemployment problem, that workers lack the necessary skills, that jobs are available for those trained to take them. Because each component of this interrelated set of beliefs is dubious, job training has been largely ineffective as a strategy for decreasing unemployment. But people who are anxious to fight unemployment and eager to believe the problem can be solved without drastic change are ready to accept this kind of reassuring cue (Edelman, 1977: 16).**

It is in this light that we should consider much of the confusion and contradictions that lie at the heart of the debate about institutional access for black people. The 'symbolic gestures', or 'metonymic evocations' that operate through access ideology do not confront the central issues of the reproduction of structural racial and cultural exclusion which occurs frequently in the lives of black people. Such 'evocations' and 'gestures' implicitly assume that black people should not have direct access or control over the framing of governmental and institutional policies, that effects them. In this study, black students reality is lived out through the dialectical structures of institutional and course philosophies, what Becher (1989) calls the 'academic tribes', who circumscribe the boundaries of legitimate academic knowledge. The black student groupings identified in this study in differing ways articulated their own construction of knowledge, rooted in an appreciation of

the black experience in Britain, rooted in the reality of social inequality and conflicting interests.

Higher educational structures and their academic tribes must start to respond positively to the demands that are being made upon them by black student groupings, as Bannister and Fransella rightly argue:

> **...if we cannot understand other people, that is we cannot construe their construction, then we may do things to them but we cannot relate to them (Bannister and Fransella, 1980: 51).**

This study has tried to give an insight into what is it is like for a selected group of black students entering, passing through and exiting a higher educational structure. The benefits gained by such students in terms of their qualifications, their confidence and experience will be of immense value. In their different ways they have developed strengths and strategies to deal with institutional indifference. However, the reality of racism and racial discrimination both inside and outside such structures means for black students that there will be a need for the creation of 'black space', the transmission of the cultural reservoir for those who are to come and experience higher education.

APPENDIX 1.

1. How would you describe your schooling ?
2. What did you after you left school ?
3. Were there any black teachers in your school or college ?
4. Why did you decide to do this course ?
5. How did you feel when you were interviewed ?
6. How do you feel about being on a black only course ?
7. Does your course reflect a multicultural or anti-racist perspective ? How could it be improved ?
8. What kind of relationship do you have with other black students ?
9. Do you see yourself as a black role model ?
10. How do you feel about Black only Access Courses ?
11. How would you describe the course environment ?
12. Have you experienced or witnessed any racist or sexist behaviour while on your course ?
13. Do you get on with your lecturers ? and fellow students ?
14. Are you satisfied with the financial arrangements on the course ?
15. What do you think about the subjects being taught on your course ?
16. How would you describe your placements ?
17. How would you describe your teaching practice ?
18. What kind of employment are you hoping to obtain after the course ?
19. What are your views about the interview ?

APPENDIX 2

Paul Allen
Room S4, Ext 209
Dudley Campus
or
Educational
Resource Unit
Walsall Campus Tel
(0922) 720141 Ext 281.

31 October 1989.

Dear .....

I am currently engaged in educational research concerning 'Access' into Higher Education for black students. The role of my research is to investigate how the Polytechnic responds to the presence of black students within the institution. I have already conducted some pilot interviews with other black students and their comments have been very interesting. I am interested in your experiences and perceptions of the polytechnic.

I would be grateful if you would take part in a series of informal interviews and discussions reflecting your views and aspirations of higher education. Your comments will be kept in the strictest confidence. I would like you to complete and return (as soon as you can) Fact File 1, attached to this letter, so arrange an interview time with you. Thank you for your cooperation in this important project.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Allen

APPENDIX 3.

Field Notes: Observation of black students in refectory, Dudley Campus.

Wednesday 8th January, 1992. 1.30pm.

Eight black students, five female, three male, on three tables in the refectory, engaged on working on a joint assignment.

One female student asks the group '*are we going to do it on computer ?*- discussion ensues around the presentation of the project group consensus is to use computer- one of the males justifies this position by stating that '*It must look good, because the teacher is expecting us to fail, we must prove them wrong'.*

Three females support this statement and argue that their lecturer did not explain in enough detail the layout of the project. They feel that when they asked for help the lecturer was very short with them-and could not get rid of them fast enough- One female suggests that the lecturer feels threatened and uncomfortable about being around black students-This view is overwhelmingly endorsed by the whole group.*

Another four black students join the group, asking questions regarding specific concepts, essay planning and referencing. Information is exchanged between the students-with final year students almost acting as teachers-explaining the best books to use and so on. This 'informal learning circle' appears to perform a range of functions, it is supportive, recreational and political. It is noticeable that in this context students revoke aspects of personal biography in a very direct way, particularly around schooling and employment-such personal biography when articulated in this context is validated by the group. There appears to be a very strong feeling of solidarity-particularly around being black.

APPENDIX 4.

General Thoughts: Research Diary.

Monday 11th February, 1991.
I have been trying to find an overall theoretical position that begins to make sense of the complexities and contradictions that is been thrown up by the initial qualitative data. So far I have not found any theoretical positions that I feel comfortable with...

Friday 24th May, 1991.
At last I think I have found something of interest in work of Edelman on Political Language. He argues that language can be used to mask and ligitimatise the failure of specific public policies to alleviate the plight of particular groups in society. It is my basic contention that contemporary debates about access provision mask a contradictory variety of interpretations about exactly what access is, and who it is for, in terms of specified target groups....There is a possibility that I can somehow link this to the work of Gareth Parry on Boundaries, although I am still trying to come to terms with his theorisation, but it does appear to provide an insight into the undertheorised and taken for granted interpretations and definitions of access. I feel that Edelman and Parry's could be potentially dominant themes in my research.

Monday 16th September, 1991.
On whose terms is access into an institution premised ? There seems to be an assumptions that says "we as an educational institution will allow you as a black individual to cross the higher education boundary provide you accept and internalise our perception of you and your assumed educational needs". Significantly this does not apply to the wider black group/community. But it suggests that real equal opportunity can deliver the goods,(but only to a small spectrum of that group). I am still having difficulty locating the experiences of the students themselves within this problematic but I feel I am making some headway in this labyrinth !

APPENDIX 5.

Nov 20 1990

Dear Paul,

The 1990 monitoring of the student intake to the Polytechnic is being processed currently under the supervision of Registry. I am informed that the detailed data will be available early in 1991. You will be welcomed to have access to any of the material I receive which concerns the details of ethnic minority entry into the Polytechnic, other than data which distinguishes students by name.

yours sincerely
Jenny Willaims

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